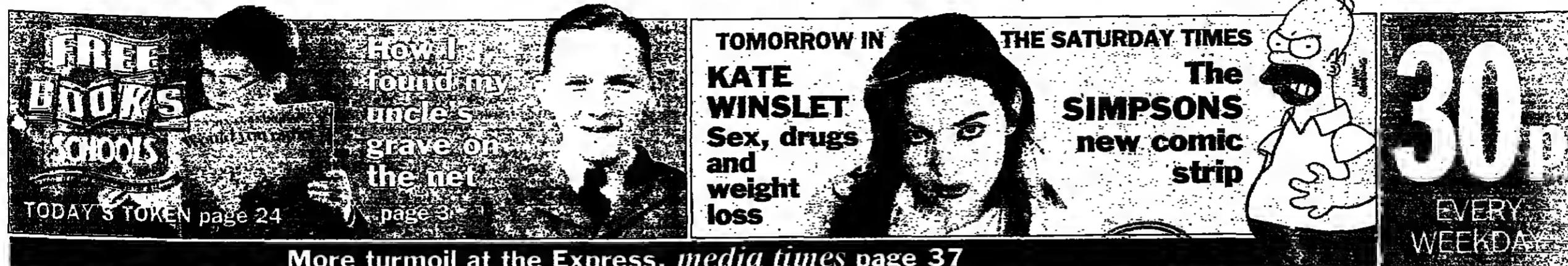


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http://www.the-times.co.uk



More turmoil at the Express, media times page 37

Mandelson offered role in S Africa



Mandelson: his friends are urging him to take the job

By ROLAND WATSON
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

PETER Mandelson was on course last night to make a dramatic return to his role as election strategist by travelling to South Africa and working for a smooth transition to Nelson Mandela's successor.

The job would see the former Trade Secretary acting as special adviser to the African National Congress, helping ensure the party's return to power and the election of Thabo Mbeki as president.

Mr Mandelson's name was mentioned for the role when Tony Blair met Mr Mbeki in Pretoria during

his three-day trip to South Africa earlier this month. The MP for Hartlepool, who resigned from the Cabinet before Christmas over his £37,000 home loan from Geoffrey Robinson, the former Paymaster General, is being strongly urged by some friends to take the job. Although he is interested in the role, Mr Mandelson has yet to commit himself.

One downside is that the three-month election campaign in South Africa clashes with a series of critical elections in Britain. A firm date will be set next month for the South African poll, but it is expected to be in May, or June at the latest. At that

time, Labour will be involved in campaigns for the Scottish parliament, Welsh assembly, local elections in large parts of the country and the European parliament.

Labour chiefs anxious to give Mr Mandelson a quiet rehabilitation away from the limelight are at pains to keep him at arms-length from the public face of the party's campaign. But as the man who masterminded the tactics for Labour's May 1997 General Election landslide, he will inevitably be called upon in an advisory role.

Another downside is that spending eight weeks or more in the South African sun would not square with

what some of his friends see as Mr Mandelson's best route back to office, namely toiling away on the "rubber chicken circuit" as a back-bench MP for Hartlepool.

The offer of the South African job dates back to before Christmas when political staff from the South African Embassy in London visited Downing Street to talk about the possibility. Mr Blair, who wants to foster closer links with the ANC as a way of developing "third way" policies, encouraged the idea.

Following his pre-Christmas resignation and given his background in election campaigning, Mr Mandelson's name became the obvious

front-runner. Despite his reservations, senior Labour figures expect him to spend at least part of the campaign for South Africa's second democratic election in Cape Town. Mr Mandelson's ties with African go back to when he spent a year in Tanzania before going to Oxford.

Labour MPs would almost certainly welcome the post. They were angered by Mr Blair's decision to keep Mr Mandelson on as his "personal representative" in talks with Gerhard Schröder's German administration and believe Mr Mandelson should serve a period of "quarantine" before trying to stage a political comeback. A purely political

role, particularly working for such a long-cherished left-wing cause as the ANC, would be likely to go down favourably on Labour's backbenches. Earlier this week Mr Mandelson's involvement in the Anglo-German talks was downgraded to head off a rebellion by Labour MPs.

In a separate development, the cross-party standards and privileges committee is expecting to hear from the new Parliamentary Commissioner Elizabeth Finkin next month on whether she believes Mr Mandelson broke parliamentary rules by failing to declare his loan from Mr Robinson in the MPs' register of interests.

GPs defy Dobson's Viagra rationing

By IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

DOCTORS were yesterday urged to prescribe Viagra free over the next six weeks because the Government can't ration the anti-impotence drug.

Defiance of Frank Dobson's intention to curtail prescriptions from March 1 by the Medical Association of impotent men going to P should be able to stop anti-impotence pill HS.

Government's plans to ration drug were de-

tight just well swallow Smartie'

Thomas Stuttaford, page 6 leading article, page 23

by the BMA as cruel medical within minutes was announced by the Secretary.

Mr Dobson wants to limit NHS prescriptions for Viagra to men suffering from specific conditions. These are those who have had prostate operations or radical pelvic surgery and those suffering from spinal injuries, diabetes, multiple or single gene neurological disease.

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Doctors see this as an unwarranted intrusion into its duty to decide what treatment is best for a patient. During the six weeks that the Government plan is open for consultation the BMA is to encourage doctors to prescribe the pill freely on the NHS because there is no legal ban that can stop them doing so.

Minister to meet IRA families

Victims of the IRA are outraged by the Northern Ireland Security Minister's plan to meet the families of eight IRA men who were killed in an SAS ambush as they were driving a mechanical digger carrying a 200lb bomb at the RUC station in Loughall in 1987.

Four killed in mid-air crash over school

By PETER FOSTER

A VILLAGE primary school came within a split-second of disaster yesterday after an RAF Tornado jet collided in mid-air with a Cessna light aircraft leaving four people dead.

Children from Mathersey school, near Worksop, north Nottinghamshire, were sitting at morning lessons when they heard a loud explosion shortly before 11.30. Seconds later, according to witnesses, debris from the light aircraft rained down over nearby fields, some pieces landing 200 yards from the school.

Less than a minute later in the village of Everton, three miles away, people reported another explosion as the Tornado GRI bomber came down half a mile from homes.

The £17 million Tornado, with two pilots on board — an RAF instructor and an Italian Air Force trainee — has manually operated ejector seats. One of the crew, the Italian, succeeded in ejecting before impact with the Cessna, but he did not survive.

Wing Commander Crispin Edmonds, acting station commander at RAF Cosford in Rendlesham, from where the Tornado had taken off, said that

an investigation as the Air Accident Investigation Branch began sifting through wreckage. They confirmed that the Cessna had taken off from a private airfield at Gamston, near Retford, with two men on board.

Yesterday parents, some in tears, collected their children from Mathersey school and told of their relief after hearing how close it had been to disaster. Teressa Mapplebeck, 27, who has a four-year-old daughter, Stephanie, there said: "I heard a crack and saw the plane falling from the sky. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I dialled 999 then ran my friend, I was in a panic."

Mrs Mapplebeck then scooped up her son Liam, two, and drove to Mathersey. "I thought it had come down on top of the school. When I got there I saw debris on the road. There was a map which I think came from the plane. People were crying."

Rob Morley, collecting his daughter, Samantha, eight, and son, Dan, six, said: "I was driving with the radio on when I heard. I did not have a number for the school but telephoned a friend who told me how close they had all come."

Samantha said: "We heard a bang, and went rushing to the windows. We saw the man parachuting down."

Douglas Scrivener, of Mathersey, said: "I saw a little plane flying around then I saw a jet which came out of nowhere. It went straight through the middle of the light aircraft. Those on board would have had no chance."

Linda Watkinson, 48, who lives 500 yards from the Everton trash, watched the RAF plane spiral to the ground.

Gurkhas join hunt for lost girls

By MICHAEL HORNELL

FIFTY Gurkhas joined the search in Hastings for the missing ten-year-olds, Lisa Hoodless and Charlene Lumnon yesterday, as police said that there had been four unconfirmed sightings of the girls in London since they disappeared on Tuesday.

The Gurkhas joined 300 police and 50 military police on the third day of the operation as the hunt spread from Hastings to open ground, woodlands and cliff tops in the surrounding Sussex countryside.

Officers from the Metropolitan Police were checking three unsubstantiated sightings in Plumstead, southeast London — two on trains and one on a bus — and one near the crematorium in Ruislip, northwest London, where the ashes of Charlene's mother, who died two years ago, were interred.

Parents' anger, page 5

Gurkhas searching cliffs above Hastings yesterday on the third day of the hunt for the missing ten-year-olds, Lisa Hoodless and Charlene Lumnon

Strike miners attack police

Striking coalminers hijacked lorries and tore through barricades in the central town of Costessey as police tried to block their march to the Romanian capital. At one stage they held policemen hostage. Closure of the mines is recommended by the World Bank and the IMF.

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Friends angered by Monet queue

Tempers were frayed outside Burlington House as hundreds of Friends of the Royal Academy queued for up to two hours to see the Monet exhibition preview. When the exhibition opens to the public tomorrow tickets will be timed to avoid congestion, but no such system was in place for the preview.

Page 6

Robertson joins Laura Ashley

The Rev Pat Robertson, the religious broadcaster who was once a contender for the Republican presidential nomination, has joined the board of Laura Ashley, which reported a sharp fall in Christmas sales and has just lost another chief executive.

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Total recall? Here is the talking equivalent of invisible ink

Britain's new Trade and Industry supremo has an amazing ability. Stephen Byers is the talking equivalent of invisible ink. Within seconds of his speaking you cannot recall a word he has said; he simply wipes himself from your consciousness.

I was at Westminster early yesterday for Questions to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. It was the dispatch box debut of Peter Mandelson's replacement. I needed to note Mr Byers's answers.

It was spooky. I couldn't. Time and again I tried to write down what Byers was saying or had just said. Time and again, all recollection fled.

Byers rose. My mind began to wander. I pinched myself and gripped a pen, forcing myself to listen. "I would like to thank my hon friend," droned Byers to Stephen Ladyman (Lab, S Thanet) "for his warm words of welcome..."

Attention began to slip. I wrestled with oblivion but an unseen force was loosening pen from fingers. I wrenched

attention back. "... We can do more..." — and my mind blanked. Short-term memory was wiped.

So total is Stephen Byers's self-wipe function that it may be some form of hypnosis, a horrifying new technique in mind-control now learned by new Labour. The fellow speaks and — *fizz!* — it's gone, snatched from recollection by the some mysterious force.

And new Labour ministers can now do this. They leave no mental trace. Stephen Byers is the typewriter with no

ribbon, the leadless pencil, the printer without ink. "External financing limits... regime in place... high quality service at affordable prices..." Byers bleated — and I blanked. The rest escapes me.

Byers is neither big nor small. His hair was grey. His accent was neutral. His suit was grey. His tie was grey. He looks like the assistant accountant to a large dental practice in Northampton. He was wearing glasses — or was he? Dammit, that's gone too.

When I managed to re-engage consciousness, he was speaking again to George Turner (Lab, NW Norfolk). "Steps have been taken... I've no doubt at all... steps

have been taken... no conflict... no doubt... no conflict..." only fragments survive, shards of cliché.

But Byers's was not the only debut at Industry Questions. Michael Wills, the new Minister for small business, was at the dispatch box for the first time. He will go far. Mr Wills takes self-wipe to new levels. I cannot even remember seeing him in the Chamber before.

And Hansard's computer-memory is susceptible to his magnetic powers of erasure. Wills seems to have wiped

most of his previous interventions from the record, which notes only eight utterances in 20 months.

On yesterday's showing these are the very models of a modern Labour minister. Replying to a question about abolishing red tape from Brian Cowen (Lib-Dem, Weston Super-Mare), Mr... er... erickey, something is trying to pluck the name from my memory... replied "Madam Speaker, this Government is committed, we are committed, we are indeed committed..." What

is to do likewise.

To interact with Mr Byers

IRA victims attack plan to meet relatives

BY MARTIN FLETCHER, CHIEF IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

VICTIMS of IRA atrocities expressed outrage last night at a minister's decision to meet relatives of an IRA unit killed by the SAS while attacking a Co Armagh police station.

Adam Ingram, the Northern Ireland Security Minister, has agreed to meet the families of eight IRA men ambushed as they were driving a mechanical digger carrying a 200lb bomb at the RUC station in Loughall in 1987.

The SAS was forewarned of the attack and 40 soldiers took part in the ambush which effectively wiped out the IRA's East Tyrone brigade. A passer-by died in the crossfire. The IRA detonated the bomb

during the gunfight, and it destroyed part of the station.

"It's a despicable act," said Brian McConnell, secretary of the group Families Acting for Innocent Relatives which represents victims of IRA violence in Co Armagh. His members plan to picket the meeting at Stormont on Monday.

"By no stretch of the imagination can these people be described as victims. These people, or their relatives, took away lives and the fact the Government is now consulting with them adds insult to injury. We feel Adam Ingram is dancing on the graves of the real victims by giving credence to these killers. What's

The Northern Ireland Office said: "Mr Ingram has wanted the fullest possible consultation on Sir Kenneth's report. He has met a wide range of groups and individuals who describe themselves as victims. In the majority of cases these meetings have been entirely private. He will be in listening mode when he meets the Loughall Truth and Justice Campaign."

□ The Tories have called a Commons debate next Wednesday on the punishment beatings by loyalist and republican paramilitary groups. They will demand that the release of terrorist prisoners be halted unless the beatings and shootings stop.

right is now wrong in this country."

Andrew Mackay, the Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary, called Mr Ingram's decision "disgraceful, outrageous and insulting to all those killed by the IRA" and urged him to cancel the meeting.

Mr Ingram has special responsibility for the victims of the Troubles, and for taking forward the recommendations of a report on them produced by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, former head of Northern Ireland's Civil Service.

The Northern Ireland Office said: "Mr Ingram has wanted the fullest possible consultation on Sir Kenneth's report. He has met a wide range of groups and individuals who describe themselves as victims. In the majority of cases these meetings have been entirely private. He will be in listening mode when he meets the Loughall Truth and Justice Campaign."

□ The Tories have called a Commons debate next Wednesday on the punishment beatings by loyalist and republican paramilitary groups. They will demand that the release of terrorist prisoners be halted unless the beatings and shootings stop.



Even the soldiers are happy to see the demise of Fort Whiterock. One who watched yesterday's demolition said troops there were on a hard routine: everything had to be bombproof to withstand the constant mortar attacks by the IRA, who saw it as a symbol of British oppression

Barracks demolished in name of peace

FORT WHITEROCK, the massive army base that has dominated the skyline of republican West Belfast for 20 years, lay in rubble last night. After resisting countless IRA attempts to destroy it, the imposing barracks, with its 50ft watchtowers and bomb-proof walls, is being torn down as part of government efforts to bolster the Ulster peace process.

Now its barricades and firing ranges are all but gone. When the demolition work is completed in a few months' time, the only building left will be the

foot of the Black Mountain. Fort Whiterock became one of Belfast's best-known landmarks and the object of bitter republican hatred. At the height of the Troubles it was home to thousands of soldiers and the target of constant IRA attacks.

Now its barricades and firing ranges are all but gone. When the demolition work is completed in a few months' time, the only building left will be the

original candle factory, which was converted into a gymnasium when the troops moved in.

Republicans who saw the base as a symbol of British oppression said its demolition was long overdue. "The observation post looked right out into the surrounding housing estates and kept people constantly under surveillance,"

Marc Moore, a Sinn Fein councillor, said. "We now hope the land will be

given back to the people in the area to have an industrial estate and maybe even a tourist attraction which would take in the Black Mountain."

Some of the soldiers based there were no less happy to see Fort Whiterock go. "Soldiers here were on a hard routine," said one as he watched the demolition. "Everything is bomb-proof, even the windows in your rooms are bomb-proof."

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Prisoner can sue for damages

£100 levy to fund new food agency

BY MICHAEL HORNBY, AGRICULTURE CORRESPONDENT

A convicted murderer who was slashed with a razor by two other jail inmates won the go-ahead yesterday to sue the prison for damages.

The Court of Appeal upheld a decision by a County Court judge last year that Gartree prison in Leicestershire acted negligently in not taking reasonable care to ensure the safety of Robert Hartshorn. The ruling means that Hartshorn, who was jailed in 1986, can now seek to have his claim for damages assessed over the attack in July 1995, which left him needing 88 stitches and scarred for life.

It also paves the way for other prisoners who can show that the authorities had been negligent to bring similar claims. At present only prisoners who are widely accepted to be likely targets of attack, such as child abusers, can seek to pursue such claims.

Bottom of class

A Leeds family action group lost a plea for a judicial review of the city council's decision to close Middle Park High School, which was bottom of the national GCSE league table. The school, which serves a council estate, has a falling register and a deficit of £346,000.

Wife speaks out

The wife of one of the policemen facing criticism over the Stephen Lawrence case defended him yesterday. Rosemary Isleby said that her husband, former Detective Chief Superintendent William Isleby, was not a racist, and that Sir William Macpherson's inquiry had been "unfair and unjust".

Stress claim

A detective who retired early because of ill health is suing Merseyside Police for damages, claiming he was negligently overworked. Detective Constable Paul Hanson, 45, who left in 1993, claims in his action that he suffers stress so badly that he will never be able to work again.

Davies returns to limelight

BY VALERIE ELLIOTT

RON DAVIES, who resigned as Welsh Secretary last autumn, is today to return to the limelight for the launch of an RSPB pamphlet on how people will be able to use the Welsh assembly to advance "green" concerns.

The event, in Cardiff, is the start of an effort by Mr Davies to regain his standing as a key figure in the assembly. He plans a speech in Cardiff next month to warn the Prime Minister that more freedom should be given to Labour Party members in Wales. But Mr Davies's credibility depends on his being selected as a candidate for the assembly for Caerphilly, his Westminster constituency, tomorrow week.

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Millions trace war dead on Internet

War Graves Commission site is outstanding success, reports Michael Binyon

MORE than four million people have sought details of their relatives and loved ones in the two months since the names of all those killed in the two world wars were posted on the Internet. The figure is higher than the number of people who have visited the Internet site of Diana, Princess of Wales, and more than twice the number of war dead whose names have been recorded by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The commission, set up in 1917 to tend the graves of soldiers of the British Empire who fell on the Western Front and elsewhere, published all its records, computerised since 1995, on the Internet on November 9, two days before Armistice Day. Since then the site has received more than 55,000 hits a day.

In addition, after publication of the Debt of Honour Register, containing the names and details of 1.78 million casualties, some 250,000 people from around the world have written to the commission seeking further details of their relatives and war dead. The commission's headquarters in Maidenhead, Berkshire, is being rebuilt to provide a faster and more reliable service.

The commission has a staff of 1,200 around the world, the

majority of them gardeners and stone masons. It has a yearly budget of £32 million, funded by the six founding countries: Britain, which pays over 75 per cent of the costs; Canada, Australia; New Zealand; South Africa and India.

The commission's main task is tending the impressive cemeteries, war memorials and graves across the vast swath of northern Europe that saw ferocious fighting in both world wars, and in more than 100 other countries where Commonwealth soldiers have died.

The commission has offices close to the battlefields at Arras and Ypres and also in Rome. Keeping as detailed

records as possible to "defeat the oblivion of time" has been a prime task. From the earliest days, next of kin and comrades in arms have located and visited the graves and memorials.

In the 1920s the records were kept in card indexes in 3,000 drawers, cross-referenced to 1,500 cemetery registers. It was impossible to find anyone without knowing the surname or details of the date of death or regiment. A search carried out after a written request costs £2.

The new database is free and makes it possible to find people with only scant information to go on. The commis-

sion says it will be particularly valuable for family historians, teachers, researchers, journalists and all those keeping alive the name and memory of those who died.

Some of the most famous British poets and architects have been associated with the design of the cemeteries and the wording on war memorials. They include Rudyard Kipling, Frederick Kenyon, Edwin Lutyens and Reginald Blomfield. Under Fabian Ware, the first vice-chairman of the commission, the firm and, at that time controversial, principle was established that all the dead were to be uniformly commemorated, without distinction between rank, race or creed. All headstones are permanent and similar.

The Internet site reproduces these principles on screen. Each name called up has the same brief description: name, rank, company and date and place of death. On each there is a picture of two poppy wreaths at the foot of the Cenotaph and the celebrated Kipling epitaph: "Their name liveth for evermore."

Further information on each name gives a description of the battle, the circumstances and whatever else is known about the soldier and his regiment.

The commission's site is:

<http://www.cwgc.org>



The Website containing 1.78 million names of war dead

The most popular sites are often the silliest

By NICK NUTTALL
TECHNOLOGY CORRESPONDENT

THE millions of websites on the Internet range from the silly and irreverent to the serious and informative.

Whether you want to biff the Prime Minister, slap a Spice Girl or indulge your passion for sports, politics or news and current affairs, someone is there to meet your demand. One of the most popular sites is BBC On-Line — www.bbc.co.uk — which has been attracting nearly 47 million visitors a month, closely followed by Yahoo's UK and Ireland pages, with 44 million.

Other chart-topping websites covered under official figures are Line One, an Internet service provider with 22.6 million visitors a month, and Soo-

net, a football news service with 12.6 million a month. There are many websites to rival those in the official charts, among them Hoddle's Helpers — www.hoddle.co.uk — which follows the fortunes of Glenn Hoddle and his guardian angel Eileen, a cartoon cipher for the England coach's faint belief in a whimsical soap opera called *Wembly Park*. Kevin-Moss of Online Media, which designed the site, says it attracts 200,000 visitors a month.

The popular irreverent sites tend to be showcases for computer designers. Many are a mix of alternative culture, including campaigns on green is-

sites, discussions on the legalisation of drugs and comments on football mixed with silly games. www.urban75.com, which attracts about 300,000 visits a month, is the work of Mike Stoccombe, and offers, among other things, the chance to punch a celebrity.

Estimating which sites are the most popular is almost impossible, but steps are being made to audit them to produce figures like those for newspaper circulations. The Audit Bureau of Circulation is covering 70 sites, mostly those of media organisations. Among them are www.uploaded.co.uk, an electronic version of *loaded*, magazine (six million a month); the British Tourist Authority's www.visitbritain.com (2 million); and the pop music site www.domeusic.com (1.4 million).

Taunted boy tried to scrub himself white'

BY RUSSELL JENKINS

A BLACK boy tried to scrub himself white after being taunted by schoolmates who chanted the refrain from a traditional blues song often sung in assemblies.

Elaine Ramsay, 33, from Radcliffe, Manchester, has withdrawn her son, Elliott Stephens, from the school. She said she could not understand why her son kept saying he wanted to be white until her sister told her about the song, sang at Radcliffe Junior School each week in assembly for the past three years.

Black, Brown and White was written and sung by the American country blues artist Big Bill Broonzy in the 1930s to record how racial prejudice made it difficult for black people to get jobs in the deep south.

The opening verse runs: "This little song that I'm singin' about! People, you all know that it's true! If you're black and gotta work for livin'! Now, this is what they will say to you! They says: 'If you was white! You's alright! If you was brown! Stick around! But if you's black, oh brother! Get back, get back, get back!'"

Ms Ramsay said that, be-



Elliott Stephens tried to scrub himself white

cause the chorus is repeated five times, the children knew it off by heart and chanted it to their son in the playground. She said her son, as the only fully Afro-Caribbean child in the school, told her that everyone turned to stare at him when the song was sung.

Mrs Ramsay said: "He started to say he hated being black and that he wanted to be white. He took knives from the kitchen and said he wanted to kill himself. Once I found him scratching at his skin with a nailbrush to try to make himself white."

George Purcell, the head teacher, said the song had now been withdrawn.

Druids take spell on duty

DRUIDS are liaising with council officers in Cornwall to protect ancient religious sites from damage when an estimated 1.5 million people descend on the county for the summer's eclipse. More than 100 stone circles, standing stones and chambered tombs are expected to become a focus for new-age mystics and tourists when the sun is blotted out on August 11.

Steve Hardgroves, the county council's principal archaeologist, said: "Pagans feel, as we do,

certain ownership and love for these sites." A new Cornish Sacred Sites Protection Network includes representatives from the National Trust, English Heritage, the Pagan Federation and the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids. It has produced a code of conduct for visitors.

Ed Prynne, Arch Druid of the St Mervyn Drusians, which claims 4,000 members, said: "Any one who has ever interfered with the stones has finished up dead in strange circumstances."



In search of our dear Uncle Owen

Armed with only scant details, David Charter went in search of his grandfather's brother, which triggered a long forgotten memory



THERE was an unwritten rule in my family that the death of Great Uncle Owen Hawkins was two generations on, still a subject too painful to talk about.

He was the youngest of four children and, as the baby, everyone's favourite. The few pictures that survive show he was barely out of his teens when he was shot down in the Second World War.

I remember my late grandfather lifting the rice-paper veil of a treasured photograph album and pausing over the image of his brother, a dashing young flier grinning with pride and confidence. Poor Owen, he said.

I believe my grandfather visited his grave once, somewhere on the Continent, but at confirmation of Owen's age. He was just 21 when he died on Wednesday July 29, 1942. He was a pilot in 23 Squadron RAF volunteer reserve. He is buried in Uden war cemetery in The Netherlands, grave 4.H.1.

My mother was delighted when I told her about the website. It triggered a fantastic last memory of her uncle, who dazzled his four-year-old niece on a surprise home visit shortly before he died. He promised to fly over the house for her and returned that afternoon, rocking the wings of his aircraft as he disappeared.

My mother's one regret about the Internet memorial is that, sadly, there is nobody left in the family of her father's generation to appreciate it.

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Friends fall out as they suffer for their art

TEMPERS were frayed and voices raised in the elegant surroundings of Burlington House yesterday as hundreds of Friends of the Royal Academy were forced to queue for a preview of the record-breaking Monet exhibition.

"This is no way to treat your Friends," was the message from disgruntled visitors in the queue, which was four or five deep in places and snaked for hundreds of metres from the gallery off Piccadilly. Many art-lovers had travelled for hours and weary had to endure a wait of about two hours.

"Tell the Academy that the Friends are annoyed... They have cocked it up," said Keith Traynor, a retired head teacher, who had set off from Northamptonshire at 5.45am.

There was even an outbreak of violence at the first private view for Friends and guests on

Royal Academy resembles first day of sales as Monet attracts thousands, writes Dalya Alberge

Wednesday. The head of security had his hand trapped in a door by visitors trying to enter as he fought to close the door at the end of the busy day.

The exhibition opens to the public tomorrow and has attracted a record number of advance bookings. More than 150,000 tickets have already been sold for the 12-week run.

They are timed limit entry to 800 an hour, to prevent con-

gestion. But no such system was in place for the preview for Friends.

They pay an annual £40 subscription for priority access to exhibitions and lectures. The Academy's problem was that it has rather a lot of Friends — more than 70,000.

"They should have timed Friends' tickets," Sally Fisher, an artist from Muswell Hill, northwest London, said. "A lot of people are older and can't stand around."

said Maureen Barnes, who had travelled for five hours from Cornwall.

"They should have anticipated this and thought through the system for the Friends."

After the official opening of

Monet in the 20th Century, 1,000 tickets will be available on the door each day as well as the timed pre-booked tickets.

But Friends considered yesterday's queues a bad omen.



Show stopper: Friends of the Academy waiting yesterday for a preview of the exhibition, which has sold more than 150,000 tickets for its 12-week run

"There will be tens of thousands after the thousand," Derek Waters, a retired head teacher from Woolwich, southeast London, said. "I dread to think what it will be like when they come," another said.

Lewis Bacall, from Ohio, described the wait as "tiring and confusing". A woman from

Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, who wished to remain anonymous said: "It's difficult to believe how we could have run an empire when we can't get timed tickets."

The Royal Academy of Arts, by contrast, appeared delighted by the size of the crowds.

David Gordon, Secretary of

the RA, said that timed tickets for the previews would not have worked because there were so many Friends and guests to cram into a few days. Mr Gordon said that Friends could book a free timed ticket after the official opening.

Some visitors yesterday were relaxed, prepared to suf-

fer for their art especially as the weather was clement. Georgina Howey, from Sussex, said: "This is very British. I don't mind it. I might if it were raining." Others had arrived mentally prepared.

Ivor Barnett, from Buckinghamshire, said: "I'm not entirely surprised." Once inside,

calm descended on the visitors. It was not only the relief of getting to the paintings but that the crowds around them were not thick — "just the odd congestion", one woman said.

"Well worth it," was the verdict of Pierre Richterich, a retired textile exporter who had travelled from Yorkshire.

I might just as well swallow a Smartie as take Viagra

MEDICAL BRIEFING

I SHOULD be grateful. I am included in Frank Dobson's list of those eligible for Viagra on the NHS. I have had radical pelvic surgery and my prostate has been removed, but, for all the good Viagra would do me, I might just as well swallow a Smartie.

The list is not a generous one. The categories he has mentioned are the least likely to benefit from Viagra. Many, probably most, of the patients in his list will try it; find it is powerless, will not return for a repeat prescription and the NHS budget will be left without serious damage.

For Viagra to work there must, of course, be normal sexual desire, but the penis still needs the appropriate nerve supply and, in the Dobson list of diseases, the nerve supply and/or the arterial supply is often severely compromised. The choice of diseases suggests that accountants rather than doctors selected those eligible for Viagra on the state.

After a radical prostatectomy, at least 50 per cent of patients, lacking the necessary nerves, would be totally unassisted by Viagra. An Italian study suggests that post-prostatectomy impotence might be as high as 90 per cent. It could be that the Italians have different criteria of erectile dysfunction, but in this operation it is not always possible to preserve the nerve supply and without it Viagra will not help.

Some patients are so obsessed by the macho quality of potency and so dread the possibility of being deprived of penetrative sex that they would prefer to opt for an earlier death and turn down life-saving surgery or radiotherapy rather than voluntarily sacrifice sexual prowess. This is mainly a

choice which faces an older age group, but occasionally younger men are confronted by the same choice. To them the deprivation would not only limit sexual activities but make paternity fraught with difficulty and dependent on a surgeon rather than romance.

Those who reject life-saving surgery to preserve potency should remember that when a progressive disease reaches a certain stage, the general deterioration in condition also results in impotence. Potency is not likely to be useful on the deadbed, and there is no sex in the graveyard. I am grateful I am still alive, albeit without some important nerves, but there are other pleasures that make life worth living.

The nature of spinal cord injury will determine if Viagra would be useful. The potency of multiple sclerosis patients will depend where the demyelination in the nervous system has occurred. Some diabetics will be helped, others will not. Patients should remember that other forms of treatment for impotence — intra-urethral pellets, penile injections and suction apparatus — are already on the NHS.

The term "severe stress" depends on the interpretation of the doctor. It seems likely that this will be the way in for Viagra treatment for those who really should be eligible, such as the young, middle-aged man whose marriage is failing because of erectile dysfunction possibly caused by a lesser physical disability coupled with psychological tensions.

However, highly trained psychiatrists might be better employed detecting early schizophrenia than discussing erectile problems.

DR THOMAS STUTTAFFORD

NHS counts the cost of 'lifestyle'

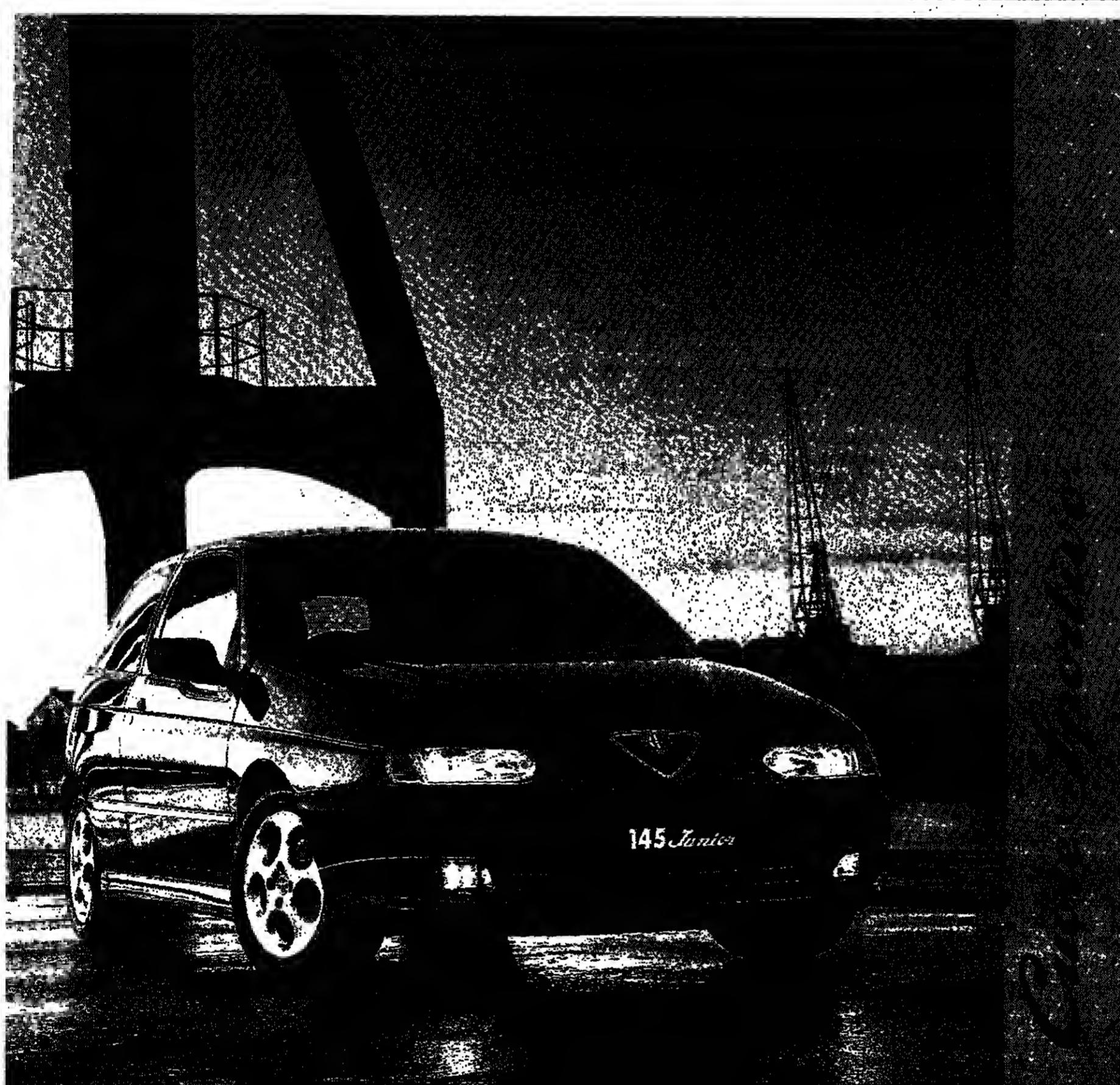
BY IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

VIAGRA is the best known of the so-called "lifestyle drugs" that the Treasury fears could wreck the Health Department budget if they are made widely available on the NHS.

The drugs treat conditions that are widely regarded as psychological, or as physical problems that sufferers ought to be able to control or deal with without the help of the health service.

Other such drugs might include Prozac, which has been a prescribable drug for depression for ten years; Xanax, for obesity; Serovat, for shyness; and Propecia, which has been approved in the United States but has yet to be licensed here, for baldness.

What worried the Treasury was the estimate, at the annual meeting of the British Medi-



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Security trick leads to airport inquiry

By MARK INGLEFIELD, POLITICAL REPORTER

THE Government is to hold an investigation into airport security after a serious breach allegedly took place at Heathrow.

The inquiry, which was announced yesterday by John Reid, the Transport Minister, came after an undercover reporter gained a security pass to work for Skycliner Services, one of the main clearing firms at Heathrow.

The reporter, who was working for *The Sun*, claimed that he had secured a pass despite supplying the company with a string of bogus references. Skycliner employed him three weeks later and was given unsupervised access to the kitchen and bar areas of six aircraft. The company declined to comment yesterday.

As result of this alleged security breach, Dr Reid has ordered BAA, the airports authority, to withdraw security passes from all Skycliner Services' temporary staff.

Dr Reid said that no new temporary passes would be issued "until such time as we are satisfied necessary and appropriate checks have been carried out to ensure that each individual is a suitable person to be employed at the airport".

Dr Reid also asked his officials to carry out "an urgent re-

appraisal of the regulations governing the issue of all employee passes at UK airports".

Although the minister stopped short of revoking Skycliner's contract, he made it clear that this was one of the "range of punitive measures" that might be taken if the company were found to be negligent in its security procedures.

The Sun had claimed that its reporter was left alone on six aircraft and was able to take a photograph of himself yards from the cockpit.

Dr Reid said yesterday that, so far, all he had were allegations, but "the prima facie report is sufficiently serious for all of us, public and ministers, to be concerned". He said he thought that between ten and 20 temporary staff were employed by the firm.

The Sun carried the report on Wednesday, ten years after the paper exposed security failures at the airport in the wake of the Lockerbie bombing.

"The fact that there's ten years in between should in no way diminish the seriousness," Dr Reid said. "It only takes one breach of security to undermine all of the efforts which BAA in particular, and our officials and inspectors and security specialists, have been making."

Stone inquiry to look at health law

By ALEXANDRA FREAN, SOCIAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

THE independent inquiry into the care of Michael Stone, concluded last October, of Lin and Megan Stone, is also to report on the adequacy of current mental health law, it emerged yesterday.

West Kent Health Authority, which was responsible for Stone's care at the time of the killings in July 1996, said that it was keen to establish whether the case should prompt the Government to consider changing the law governing the compulsory detention of people with mental health problems.

Although he was known to have a criminal record and to be prone to violent outbursts, Stone could not be detained under the Mental Health Act

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Valerie Marshall will lead a £720,000 quest for a naturally creamy yoghurt

Yoghurt scientists win pot of EU cash

By PAUL WILKINSON

A RESEARCH team has won a £720,000 grant from Brussels for a three-year project on making yoghurt creamy.

The European Commission is helping scientists from the dairy industry to develop a natural thickening process, avoiding the need for artificial additives and gelatine.

The team, drawn from across Europe, is led by Valerie Marshall, a microbial biochemist at Huddersfield University. She said that improving yoghurt consistency had long been a challenge for manufacturers. "We want to develop a yoghurt to get that creamy feel naturally by harnessing its natural organisms. This way is cheaper, because you're using a process that is already there."

The team was one of only 50 to win grants out of 500 applicants working on food or agriculture projects. Professor Marshall said: "I don't think it's an awful lot of money because it's shared between seven partners. That works out at about £30,000 a year to each."

Tomorrow in **the times**
magazine

KATE WINSLET as never before

'I got so thin.
So tired.
I was bone.
It was horrible.'

WINSLET
on sex, drugs
and losing weight

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Blair says we need more do-gooders

By MARK HENDERSON AND ALEXANDRA FREAN

A DIRECTORY providing details of voluntary organisations is to be sent to every household in Britain as part of a drive to promote charity as figures disclosed that individual giving had dropped by nearly a third over five years.

The directory, which will set out opportunities for voluntary work, is one of the initiatives announced by the Prime Minister yesterday to increase support for charities. Addressing the National Council of Voluntary Organisations conference, Tony Blair urged Britons to mark the millennium with an "explosion in giving" and for the term "do-gooder" no longer to carry a sneering tone.

Mr Blair said: "Let those of us who believe in the power of community reclaim the idea of doing good and wear it as a badge of pride. It is good to do good – good for those charities and organisations and neighbourhoods in which the good is being done, but good for the do-gooder as well." His comments build on his call at the 1997 Labour Party conference for a "giving age".

Yesterday he also announced plans for a Whitehall task

force, the Active Community Unit, to co-ordinate and promote voluntary work across the country, and two new schemes that will encourage people to give time to charity.

The measures coincided with the publication by the National Council of Voluntary Organisations of figures showing that donations to charity have fallen by 31 per cent in the past five years. Separate research from the National Centre for Volunteers showed a decline in the number of people giving their time. The biggest drop was among young people. Seven years ago 55 per cent of 18 to 24-year-olds said they had volunteered in the past year. The figure is now 43 per cent.

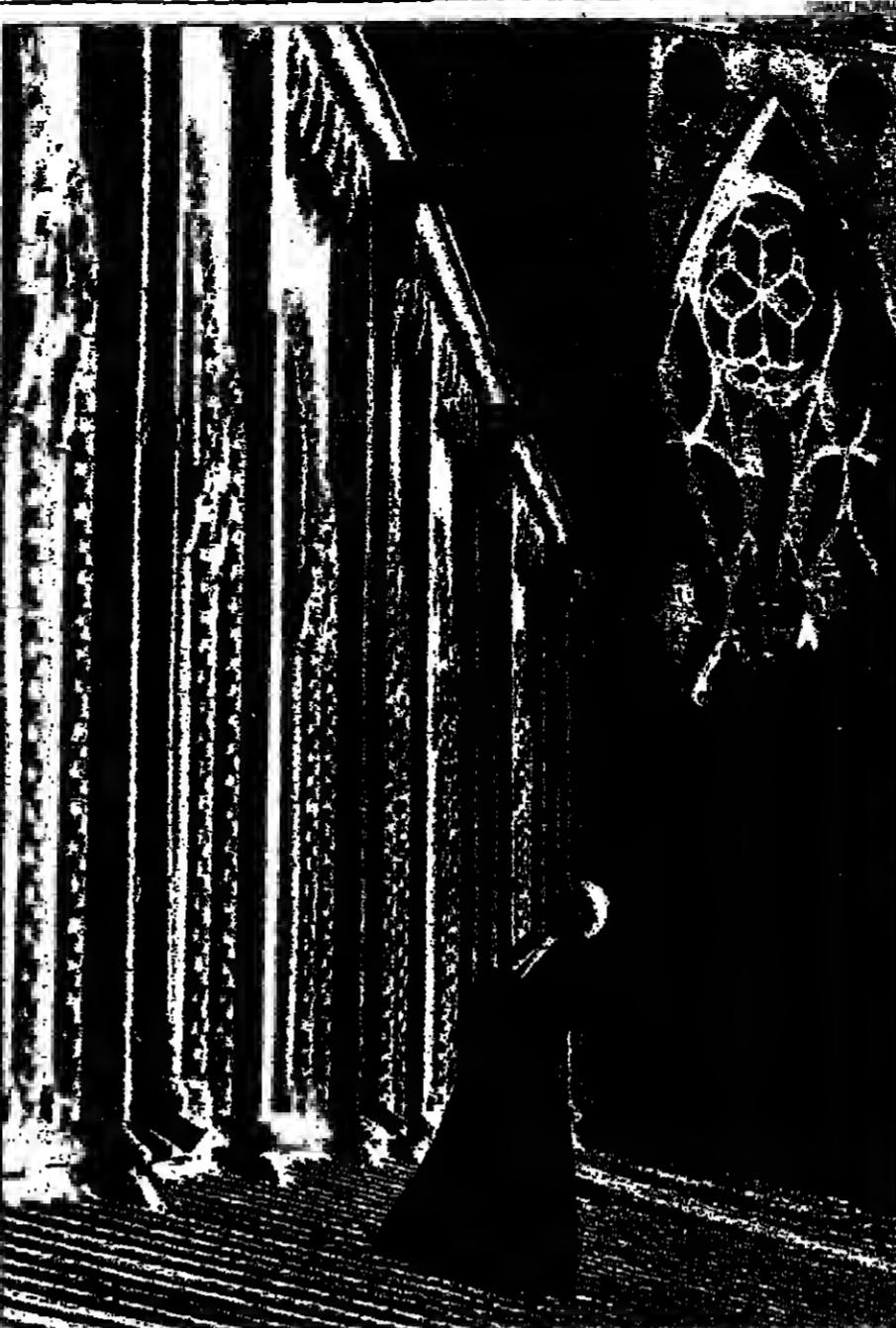
Stuart Etherington, chief executive of the NCVO, welcomed the initiatives, but called for tax breaks to encourage the rich to donate, and for charities to be exempt from VAT. "If it is a priority for government to give support to the sector, we need to see mechanisms that will help generate income and individual giving."

Mr Blair also launched the Millennium Awards Fellowship programme yesterday.

40,000 Britons will receive grants of an average of £2,000 by the end of next year to undertake community and charity projects. The £200 million programme is funded by the Millennium Commission, and an endowment fund will make the scheme permanent.

Millennium Fellows will receive a certificate of achievement, the first of which were presented by Mr Blair yesterday. These are intended to increase the esteem in which volunteers are held by society. The idea has been copied from America, where a period of voluntary service is virtually obligatory on the strongest CVs.

David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, announced details yesterday of the Millennium Volunteers programme, which will use £48 million of public money to provide thousands of 16 to 24-year-olds with opportunities for voluntary work. The scheme had been intended as a kind of civil "national service" taking in hundreds of thousands of people, but has been scaled back because of problems with long-term funding. Participants will receive certificates of achievement.



The Very Rev Michael Higgins, Dean of Ely, on the newly repaired cathedral roof.

City lawyers give up their time to help pupils with reading

Hannah Betts on a project that is benefiting from free books scheme

A SCHOOL named after the father of genetic engineering has come up with a cross-fertilisation strategy of its own to boost its involvement in *The Times* Free Books for Schools Scheme.

Thomas Fairchild School, in Hackney, East London, and Linklaters, a leading City law firm, joined forces in September to form an in-school reading programme and are now directing their combined energies to collecting tokens for the scheme.

Every week 40 Linklaters lawyers and support staff devote one of their lunch breaks to teaching reading at the school. The project was massively oversubscribed, with almost 200 staff applying to help. The pairings are the same each week, so that a

bond is forged between two very different worlds.

The primary school is located in an economically deprived area and, for a large proportion of the children, English is their second language.

Alasdair Friend, the head teacher, said: "Literacy is one of our top priorities, but it's also been a real cultural exchange. We're less than five minutes away from the City; but some of our children have never been there. It's an introduction to another world."

The reading partners become firm friends. Gary McKinzie-Smith, a trainee solicitor, reads with eight-year-old Baboucar Jeng, known as Babs. Mr McKinzie-Smith said: "The relationship is a unique one for me: he's eight



and I'm 25. We've both enjoyed meeting someone from a different walk in life." Mr McKinzie-Smith says that Babs can be cheeky and enjoys the kudos that the scheme brings him with other children.

Since the project started, reading has become the fashionable lunchtime activity at Thomas Fairchild, with pupils lining up to meet the Linklaters' taxis. At Christmas, a

celebration was held at Linklaters for lunchtime readers.

Lately, children and lawyers alike have become avid collectors of the Free Books for Schools tokens printed in *The Times* and on packets of Walkers crisps. "Our token collecting's going really well. Babs enjoys crisps and I always read *The Times*," Mr McKinzie-Smith said.

Does your school or business have a story to tell about its participation in *The Times* Free Books for Schools Scheme? If so, please call on 0171-995 9018. At the end of the scheme, *The Times* will publish a Free Books for Schools honours list in which successful schools and businesses will be commended for the number of tokens they collected and for the original ways in which they did so. Telephone your nominations now.

Token, page 24

Bible class finds room at the inn

By SUE LAPPEMAN

A SUNDAY school class is to meet in a pub after having to leave the vicarage.

Children from St Peter and St Paul's Church in Shoreham, Kent, will have their lessons next to gaming machines and a pool table in the back room of the George Inn at Shoreham, Kent.

The class, now with 20 pupils, had been meeting in rooms at the former vicarage for the past 13 years but the family that lived there has decided to rent out the rooms.

The Rev Barry Simmons found the most convenient venue for the school at the pub across the road.

Mick Fiznis, the landlord, said: "The room at the back of the pub is not connected to the main bar". Mr Simmons said: "We shall be there only from 10.30 to 11.30 on Sunday mornings so there won't be any of the public there."

Oxford college suspends its anti-fees protester

By HANNAH BETTS

ed that she and the whole of the Senior Common Room would be extremely sorry if Ms Paskell-Brown decided not to reconsider her position.

The suspension will come into force on Monday, after Ms Paskell-Brown has had an opportunity to appeal. Under the ruling, she will be banned from all college buildings.

Ms Paskell-Brown, 33, said the move would force her to submit: "The last few days have been absolutely hellish, and in many ways I'm just glad it's all over. I defend my principles into the ground, but I'm being backed into a corner now and I don't think I can go on. But the campaign against fees is by no means over – we will continue our fight indefinitely."

At Somerville, four protesters are waiting to hear their fate after a meeting of the college's governing body. Dame Fiona Caldicott, Principal of the college, said yesterday that

she wanted to speak to each student before announcing the college's decision.

Yesterday the colleges issued a statement: "The university, Somerville and St Hilda's Colleges are prepared to take action in response to the non-payment of tuition fees by a small number of students."

"We regret that the protest which these students are making against the Government's changes to the funding of higher education has put them in this position. However, we must consider the consequence of their actions for their studies and the implication of their non-payment for other members of the university. We hope this matter will be resolved as soon as possible."

Todays 2,000 students from around the country will take part in Oxford's biggest demonstration for nine years.

John O'Leary, page 41

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HOME NEWS 9

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Pinochet 'can only be tried in Spain'

By JOANNA BALE

EXTRADITION to Spain is the only way to bring General Pinochet to justice because Chile is unlikely to put him on trial, Amnesty International told the law lords yesterday.

Ian Brownlie, QC, for Amnesty International, said: "It appears to be extremely unlikely that justice will be done in Chile and, given the obvious absence of any jurisdiction of an international criminal tribunal, then all that is left are extradition proceedings."

Addressing the new hearing to decide the general's fate, Professor Brownlie stated that, if extradition was denied, the former dictator "would have the benefit of a wall of impunity". He also argued that international conventions on torture and hostage-taking adopted into British law were sufficient to deny General Pinochet the immunity for a head of state that he is claiming.

Sections of the State Immunity Act 1978, which might be deemed to afford him immunity, did not do so, he said. "The State Immunity Act does not apply to criminal proceedings. In any case, you cannot have

immunity from proceedings over acts which constitute crimes in international law."

Professor Brownlie made no mention of the fact that it was Lord Hoffmann's failure to disclose his close links with Amnesty International that had caused the law lords to set aside their initial decision denying immunity to General Pinochet.

Amnesty was once again granted permission to address the hearing, and the organisation's counsel is also representing two other human rights groups as well as the families of two British victims of the Pinochet regime, William Beauchamp and Sheila Cassidy.

Earlier, the law lords were told that tortures alleged to have been carried out under the orders of the general had long been recognised as crimes under international law. Christopher Greenwood, for the Crown Prosecution Service, on behalf of Spain, argued that there was a clear international consensus about torture. He said: "We are not dealing with an area of international law on which reasonable states differ-



Lucia Pinochet, wife of the former dictator, greeting supporters outside his home in Surrey. She thanked them for their efforts on his behalf

We are dealing with conduct which for 60 years has been unequivocally deemed to be unlawful, a crime under international law."

Professor Greenwood went on to say that the allegations against General Pinochet were not purely an internal matter for Chile. "Torture falls into the category of acts which have become a matter of concern to the entire international re-

community, wherever they take place." He argued that it was clear that individual countries had jurisdiction to try allegations of torture, pointing out that the proposed international criminal court was not yet operating, and that tribunals to try alleged crimes in troubled areas such as Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia were still rare.

More than hundred of General Pinochet's supporters yesterday gathered near his

rented home on the Wentworth estate in Surrey where he is living under the conditions of his bail and were addressed by his wife, Lucia.

Through a loudspeaker she thanked them for coming all the way to Britain to "express personally your belief in the values of freedom and dignity that inspire Chileans".

The lords' hearing continues on Monday.

Judge discharges juror for using mobile phone

By FRANCES GIBB, LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

A JUROR was discharged by a judge yesterday after he learnt that she had taken a mobile telephone call while deliberating on a case.

The young mother was overheard by a usher making babysitting arrangements with her mother, from the retiring room, where she was trying to reach a verdict on a case involving three men and a woman accused of physical abuse of "mentally handicapped adults at a home".

The jury had already been out for 3½ hours on Wednesday afternoon when the usher went into their room at Exeter Crown Court to tell them that they could be sent home for the night. By law, a jury should be isolated during their deliberations "in a private and convenient place".

Judge Graham Neville, discharging the juror, who had sat through eight days of the

trial, told the remaining 11 members of the panel that mobile telephones were an increasing problem for the court. "I have discharged the lady juror with the mobile phone," he said. "We do not know what to do about mobile phones. People are told not to use them in court, but we are everywhere now; and we can't take something away from them that is their property, just ask them not to use it."

"I am sure the juror did not do anything improper, but we have to be on the safe side."

A spokesman for the Lord Chancellor's Department said that courts routinely had signs up saying that mobile telephones should be switched off, or, in some cases, handed in.

In March last year, a judge ordered a court reporter to be taken to the cells when his mobile phone went off in the middle of a trial. In November

1997 a BBC reporter was ordered out of court in South Africa where he was covering the Earl Spencer divorce case after his mobile telephone rang.

In yesterday's case, the judge asked the remaining jurors to continue their consideration of the trial involving three care homes in Torrington, Devon.

Donald Lee, 48, denies seven counts of ill-treating one female and three male patients in his guardianship. Diane Baxter, 51, denies two counts of ill-treating two female patients; David Tudor-Poole, 30, denies six counts of ill-treating four female and two male patients; Ivan Rowlands, 52, denies ill-treating one female patient.

The charges followed a joint investigation by police and Devon social services after complaints by relatives.

Warning over gene weapon for ethnic cleansing

By IAN MURRAY
MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

WEAPONS capable of ethnic cleansing could become a reality within ten years, with the information needed to make them being available on the Internet, the British Medical Association said yesterday.

Current research aimed at developing drugs to cure serious diseases such as cancer would make it possible to create a "delivery system" for biological weapons able to target specific groups of people with a killer virus, said Sir William Ascher, chairman of the BMA's board of science. "Science which is being used for benign purposes can be put to malignant use."

Vivienne Nathanson, head of ethics at the BMA, said that, as knowledge of human genetic make-up increased, it would be possible to target very specific groups. Height, skin and eye colour were all factors that could be identified and a biological weapon could then be created to harm only people with those genes.

Work on the Human Genome Project, which aims to identify all human genes and map them by 2005, will make it possible to be very specific about what genes make up each individual. It is also now scientifically agreed that "races" do not exist; certain groups merely have higher concentrations of some genes.

Diseases such as cancer are caused by genes that have an abnormal structure. Genetic therapies are being developed that enable drugs to be designed so that they only attack the unhealthy genes. In the treatment a gene is introduced that recognises the unhealthy cells triggering the release of a virus or poison that destroys the cancer. Healthy cells are left untouched.

The genetic weapon would work in an identical way, recognising victims by their genetic make-up and then releasing a virus that killed them. Dr Nathanson said the information would be available on the Internet and the drugs could be made in small laboratories. Terrorists as well as states could use the technology.

Biotechnology, Weapons and Humanity: BMJ Bookshop, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9TP, £14.

CORRECTION

Recycling clue to evolution

By NICK NUTTALL

THIS mystery of how the elephant developed its trunk, the deer its antlers and the giraffe its neck may have been solved by scientists.

Researchers believe that a tiny genetic trick, common to all animals, can lead to a bewildering array of shapes and forms, from extravagant furs and elaborate shells to the colours of butterflies' wings.

It was previously thought that animals would have need

ed to evolve new genes, but

findings by a team at the University of Madison-Wisconsin indicate that nature simply re-orders genetic circuits in new ways. Their conclusions, in the journal *Science*, come from a study of wing-making genes in fruit flies and two different species of butterfly from North America and East Africa.

They traced the genetic circuitry that governs wing development and colour, and found that genes had been recycled to create new pigmentation by

switching on a new range of enzymes or biological catalysts.

David Keys, a member of the team, said: "Evolution is working by integrating sets of things it already has. You are using a circuit over and over again." Sean Carroll, a molecular biologist and the team's leader, said that the genes used to make spots on butterflies' wings were the same as the ones used to develop limbs in animals. The difference was in the way in which parts of the gene were switched on.

Lights out

The beacon at Beachy Head, which has warned shipping for 171 years, has gone out after the recent cliff fall damaged the main cable. A foghorn has also been cut off. The lighthouse is operating on an emergency lamp.

Trout break out

Trout swam through gardens and along the roads of an estate in Cwmaman, South Wales, after a trout farm flooded in heavy rain and a run-off culvert became blocked. Many of the fish were eventually washed into a river.



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Dobson accused of seeking scapegoats

BY HELEN RUMBLEY

THE Government's criticism of nurse training was an attempt to make ward staff the scapegoats for the troubles of the NHS, a nursing leader said yesterday.

Christine Hancock, head of the Royal College of Nursing, said that nurses had suffered a "night of the long knives". She was responding to comments from Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, who said last week that some young people were deterred from a nursing career by the emphasis on academic training rather than basic caring skills.

Ms Hancock said that the NHS needed staff with the most up-to-date medical knowledge, as well as decent salaries. The chronic shortage of nurses could not be blamed on the trend towards college courses rather than hospital training. "Some assume that you can't be well educated and a caring person with practical skills. Clearly, that's rubbish," she told a conference in London.

The issue of less education

for nurses is a nonsense: nurses are hungry for more education. In fact, it is more education that helps us to recruit more nurses."

There are 12,000 nursing vacancies. "The world needs someone to blame. In something akin to the 'night of the long knives', it seems that nurse education is now the scapegoat for a wounded NHS," Ms Hancock said.

She rejected the idea of increasing the number of less-qualified carers in hospitals.

NHS STAFF COMPLAIN OF BULLYING

STAFF IN THE NURSING HOME are being bullied by their managers, according to a survey. The Royal College of Nursing has called for an inquiry into the findings of its survey, which found that 70 per cent of respondents believe they have been treated unfairly.

The shortfall in staff to perform basic tasks such as bathing and feeding was best covered by employing more highly qualified nurses rather than hospital care assistants who perform routine tasks", she said. This was more cost-effective in the long run as it had been proved that skilled nurses got patients better quicker.

"High levels of skill are not cheap on the pay bill, but it makes a real difference. Studies have proved that with a low ratio of qualified to un-

qualified staff, patients run a higher risk of developing avoidable complications."

Ms Hancock did, however, admit that there were difficulties with Project 2000, the training system introduced in the 1980s which involves a three-year diploma course rather than the previous system of more practical training in hospital nursing schools.

Last week Mr Dobson suggested increasing the numbers of student nurses on wards. But he was urged to be cautious by Sue Norman, head of the UK Central Council, the nurses' regulatory body.

"We are very concerned about whether nurse education is appropriate," said Ms Norman, "which is why we set up a commission to give us recommendations on change in June. Project 2000 is up to 15 years old and we need to rethink it, but we want to be very careful that we don't give a knee-jerk reaction."

She believed that there was no strong a divide between registered general nurses and healthcare assistants.



Gary Glitter yesterday. He wore his sunglasses throughout the four-minute hearing

Glitter in court on child sex charges

GARY GLITTER made his first appearance in a Crown Court yesterday to face a series of sex and child pornography allegations.

The 54-year-old pop star, who has a home in Wedmore, Somerset, was driven to the court in Bristol in his Mercedes coupé, which has blacked-out windows. He wore a black suit and leather coat and a black wig.

He kept his sunglasses on throughout the four-minute hearing, during which he spoke only to confirm his real name as Paul Francis Gadd. He cupped his ear to help him to hear the submissions made by his lawyer.

Glitter, a father of two, faces eight charges of sexual offences involving a girl and 50 charges relating to indecent photographs of children. He was arrested in 1997 after police examined a computer he had taken to a shop for repairs. The allegations date back as far as 1980.

Yesterday the case was adjourned for two months and he was remanded on conditional bail.

Men suffer equally on violence in the home

BY STEWART TENDLER
CRIME CORRESPONDENT

MEN are just as likely to be victims of domestic violence as women, according to the results of a Home Office survey issued yesterday. The research showed that 4.2 per cent of men and the same percentage of women said they were assaulted last year.

Male victims were likely to be under 25, working part-time and in households where there were financial difficulties. They may have had a long-term illness or disability. The women victims were also young and more at risk if they were at home with children or separated from their partners.

The research also said, however, that women were twice as likely to have been injured, three times more likely to have faced serious threats and were more likely to have been assaulted at least three times.

The study suggested that the risk of domestic violence was increasing and one reason might be that young people had more relationships, living with different partners.

The survey, based on the British Crime Survey for 1996, concluded there were 6.6 million incidents of domestic violence in 1995.

Accurate radiation aids cancer sufferers

BY IAN MURRAY
MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

A NEW radiotherapy for prostate cancer which significantly reduces the risk of side-effects has successfully completed its trials and could be used to improve treatment for many other cancers.

The treatment, which is known as conformal radiotherapy, shapes the radiation beams to the irregular outlines of a tumour, confining its effect almost entirely to the diseased tissue.

Prostate patients given conventional radiotherapy are at high risk of developing rectal inflammation and bleeding. This can be so severe that it is necessary to limit the radiation which meets the cancer is not properly destroyed.

The new technique is being developed by Institute of Cancer Research scientists, who have conducted trials on 225 patients at the Royal Marsden Hospital in Sutton, Surrey, and Fulham, London. The Lancet reports the project was partly supported by funding raised for the institute by The Times Christmas appeal in 1997, which was so successful that additional funds were available to be directed into research such as this.

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Kosovo peace monitor defies Serb ban

Instead of leaving the country as ordered, William Walker is fighting back, writes Tom Walker in Sipolje

THE Head of the international monitoring mission in Kosovo defied Serbian government orders to leave Yugoslavia yesterday instead, he took journalists on a tour of army positions that he said were in breach of the ceasefire.

William Walker had intended to fly to Belgrade to confront his accusers but, on advice from Wesley Clark, Nato's Supreme Commander, he decided it was too risky. It would have given Yugoslav authorities the chance to deny his plane landing permission and ditch him out of the country.

Confident Mr Walker himself that he had strong new evidence to back his assertion that Serbian security forces were responsible for the Racak massacre. There was speculation among monitors that infiltrating police radio messages may have been picked up during observations of the operation that left 45 ethnic Albanians dead, most with bullet wounds to the head.

Milosevic has pushed himself into a corner, and he suddenly realises he doesn't even have the support of Russia,"

said an aide to the ambassador.

Mr Walker, with 37 years of foreign service and experience of angry Serb minorities from Croatia, must know, however, that he has embarked on a risky course. He was meant to have left Yugoslavia by 8pm, after the authorities had extended his stay by 24 hours, and his office has been inundated with threatening telephone calls from Serbs.

The previous evening, Mr Walker had entertained the international press corps in Pristina, and laughed off suggestions that the event should be called "the last supper".

He said he had the full backing of all 54 nations in the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and had received many letters of support for his defiance of President Milosevic's Yugoslav regime.

"I've had a letter from Kofi Annan, and I guess that kind of represents the world," he said. Afterwards he was forced to leave the restaurant by a back exit as Serb skinheads lingered menacingly in

its car park. The American has a few bodyguards from special forces, but largely relies on Albanian staff for protection. No one in the Pristina OSCE mission is armed.

Mr Walker has remained steadfastly unrepentant since he pinned responsibility for the Racak deaths on the police on Saturday. "I did not blame the Serbs, I blamed the security forces," he told journalists. Asked if the OSCE mission would have been worthwhile if it was closed down, he said: "We have shed some light on what's going on here."

Vuk Draskovic, the former opposition leader now in alliance with Mr Milosevic, was said to have been involved in talks with Russian leaders to find a face-saving deal for the Yugoslav Government that would allow Mr Walker to stay.

A Serbian deputy premier, Tomislav Nikolic, said that because of "diplomatic moves", Mr Walker's departure "will be delayed so that he could be given the chance not to be thrown out but to resign"—ostensibly for health reasons.



William Walker outside a Yugoslav barracks yesterday near the northern town of Podujevo as he took journalists on a tour of army positions

The controversy overshadowed the arrival in the Kosovo capital of Finnish forensic scientists, who began their examinations of the Albanian bodies forcibly removed by police from Racak mosque on Monday. The Finns have portable X-ray machines to study bullet

wounds—equipment that had not been available locally. Helena Ranta, the team leader, said that within ten days, the Racak mystery could be cleared up.

Mr Walker's persistence was matched by that of the police, who continued another

offensive in the north of Kosovo on the outskirts of the industrial town of Mitrovica. The streets of Sipolje village lay deserted as hundreds of officers in battle fatigues pushed back KLA guerrillas in neighbouring Vagacin and settlements to the southwest.

Reporters heard tank shells fired in the morning, and an army anti-aircraft gun was parked in the middle of Sipolje in the afternoon. There were no reports of casualties. Police appear to have been flushing out a KLA cell they blame for the death of a colleague, and serious injuries to others, a week ago. A CNN camera crew recorded a round-up of male suspects, in an operation bearing troubling similarities to the start of the Racak operation. Few OSCE monitors were in evidence.

US calls for Nato airstrike threat against Milosevic

By MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE EDITOR

THE Americans are calling for late to issue an ultimatum to President Milosevic to force him to comply with all demands over Kosovo or face airstrikes.

Although the ultimatum option has not yet been approved by Nato members, a Foreign Office official confirmed that this was now one of the priority topics under discussion at alliance headquarters Brussels. Nato sources said Washington was not the only alliance member pushing for an ultimatum.

Britain is expected to support the idea, although the Foreign Office official said it would be practical only as a proper political strategy had been agreed. The ultimatum option will be studied at today's meeting of the six-nation Contact Group in London. However, with Russia opposed to any military action, airstrikes will not be on the Contact Group's agenda.

The Foreign Office official said it would be important to spell out Nato's demands to Belgrade. They will have to include, the official said, complete compliance with the October peace agreement reached with Richard Tolbroke, the American special envoy, including the withdrawal of most of the Serb forces to their barracks, thus ending the expul-

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Mexico wary as Pope returns

WHEN the Pope arrives in Mexico today he will receive a rapturous welcome from one of the world's great Roman Catholic nations. The enthusiasm of his reception will conceal the strain and sometimes violent relationship between the Mexican authorities and the church.

The visiting pontiff will address a crowd where foreign priests have been expelled recently for alleged involvement in politics. The Catholic Church has also been blamed for forming an armed revolution among Indians in the southern state of Chiapas. And Church leaders have spoken out against Mexico's human rights record, government corruption and the free-market economic policies many blame for worsening poverty.

The Government is so anxious about the political content of the Pope's public remarks that it has sent representatives to the Vatican in recent weeks in an apparent effort to soften the impact of his visit. But, much as in Cuba a year ago, official sources say the Pope is unlikely to direct public speeches at his hosts. Instead, the issue of Chiapas will be reserved for a private meeting with President Zedillo.

Church under fire for political activities, writes David Adams in Miami

"We don't expect the Pope to make any direct comments in his public appearances," said Juan Flores, a spokesman for the Mexican Church's Social Pastoral Commission. Instead, his homilies are likely to address general issues affecting the Americas, such as human rights, violence and poverty. As for Chiapas, "he will raise it, but not in an incendiary fashion", Señor Flores said.

But any mention of human rights has special resonance in Mexico. Only last week the New York-based Human Rights Watch issued the findings of a two-year investigation. This found that Mexican judges, prosecutors and law-enforcement officers collude to torture suspects; obtain evidence illegally

and block investigations into human rights violations.

For generations the Catholic Church was never officially recognised by the leaders of Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and it remained silent on important political and social issues. But, after winning official recognition in 1992, it has taken on a more activist role.

In Chiapas, wealthy, pro-government landowners and armed paramilitary groups have waged a virtual war on the Church since Zapatista rebels launched an armed uprising in 1994. Priests have been attacked for defending demands by Indian rebels for social justice.

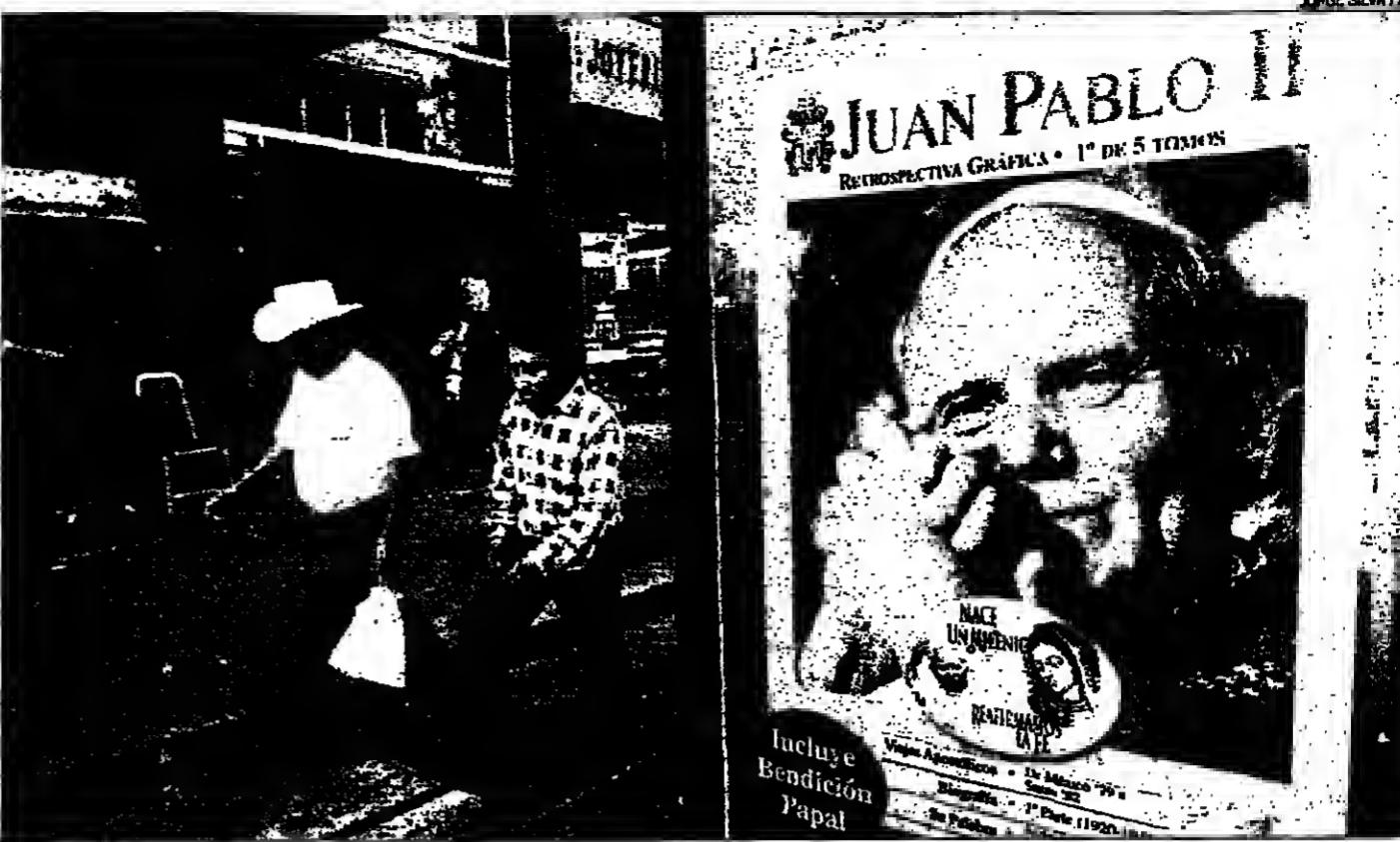
A dozen churches have been closed and in some areas priests seldom walk about after dark or travel to more remote parishes for fear of ambush. Gunmen opened fire on a pastoral convoy carrying Bishop Samuel Ruiz of San Cristóbal de las Casas, whom the Government views as the spiritual leader of the Chiapas rebellion.

Instead of coming to the Church's rescue, the Government has sided with its critics, expelling six foreign-born priests accused of supporting the rebels. Msgr Ruiz hit back on Christmas Eve, issuing a scathing pastoral letter, forwarded to the Pope, that attacks "the madness of an economic model that devours a nation's wealth and concentrates it in few hands".

Medio is where, 20 years ago,

the Pope began his papal mission. This is his 85th foreign trip, and it may be his last to this hemisphere. These days his speech is slurred and he is increasingly frail. The official purpose of his visit is to attend one of a series of regional gatherings of bishops convened to set church goals for the new millennium. Most of the talk will be

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A poster of the Pope at a bus stop in Mexico City heralds the pontiff's arrival today for his fourth visit to the country in 20 years

the plight of Honduras and Nicaragua, the two Central American countries worst hit by last year's Hurricane Mitch. Both have enormous outstanding debts.

On Tuesday he leaves Mexico for the United States where, during a two-day visit, he will hold a private meeting with President Clinton.

WORLD IN BRIEF

France is fined over media rights

Striking: The European Court of Human Rights condemned France for violating the free-speech rights of the satirical weekly *Le Caïd Enchainé*. The court found French courts had violated the European Human Rights Convention by fining the magazine F5,000 (£1,500) in 1993 for publishing tax forms of Jacques Chirac, then head of the carmaker Peugeot. An appeals court ruled in January that made inroads into M. Chirac's privacy despite lawyers' arguments that anyone is entitled to consult public tax rolls. The magazine had printed the tax form during a strike at Peugeot over pay, and the form showed M. Chirac's own salary had increased by nearly 50 per cent in two years. The European Court ordered the French state to pay the weekly £10,000 in damages and Fr60,000 in costs. (Reuters)

\$18m raider jailed

Jacksonville: A Florida armoured car driver who stole a record \$18 million (£11.5 million) was jailed for 25 years for kidnapping, money-laundering. Philip Johnson, 35, pulled a gun on co-workers and loaded a van floor-to-ceiling with cash. He said: "I don't want more than £1 or £2 million for myself." He said he planned to use 20 per cent to help poor Central Americans and return the rest if his bosses stopped training staff in the states. (AP)

Colombia talks falter

Colombia: Colombia's largest left-wing guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, has suspended peace talks with the Government, demanding that the authorities dismantle the right-wing paramilitary death squads who have resumed a terror campaign. (Gabriela Gamini writes). President Pastrana said he regretted the premature end to talks, which he had hoped would become a central achievement of his administration.

24 die in religious riots

Java: Rioters fired flaming arrows at places of worship and armeengangs blocked roads as violence among Christians and Muslims spread in eastern Indonesia. At least 24 people have died this week and almost 3,000 have fled their homes in Maluku province. The violence was the latest in a series of religious-related clashes amid social tensions caused by the nation's first economic crisis in three decades. (AP)

Taliban clash kills 12

Islamabad: Afghan tribesmen clashed with Taliban militiamen in a southern border city after they were stopped from playing a traditional game of egg fighting, leaving 12 people dead and two wounded, a private news agency reported. The fighting broke out in hot weather when tribesmen refused to obey a Taliban edict declaring the game, in which two participants each hold an egg and hit them together until one breaks, un-Islamic. (AP)

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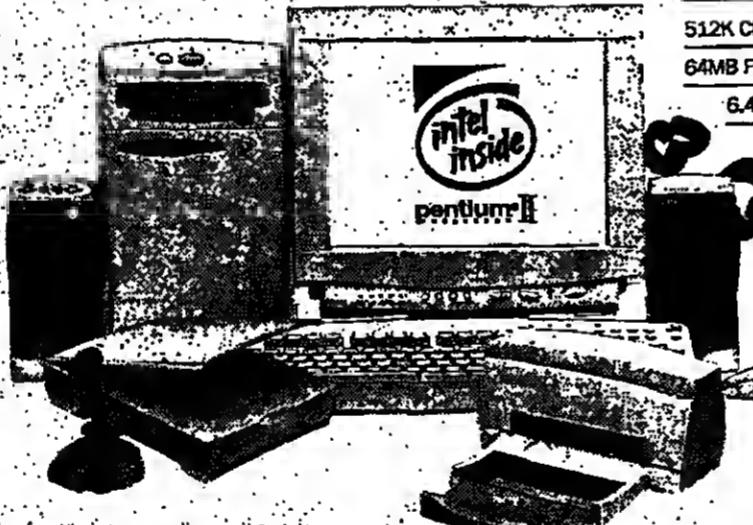
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Nelson, top, and his lover, Lady Hamilton

Italians launch attack on Nelson

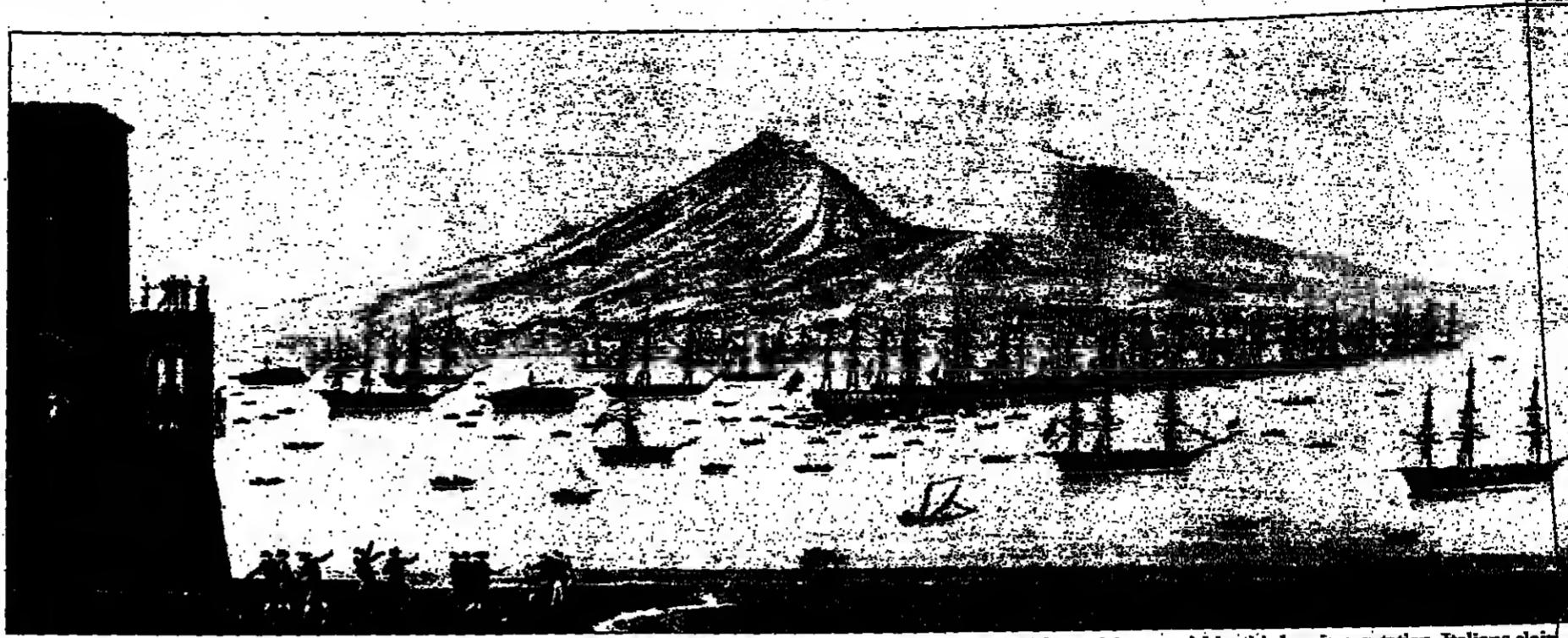
'Brutal' British hero slaughtered rebels, writes Richard Owen in Rome

LORD NELSON was criticised yesterday by Italian historians, who branded him a war criminal who had used "brutal, bloodthirsty methods" to put down a revolt in Naples 200 years ago.

But British scholars defended the hero of Trafalgar, saying that his actions in Naples had to be understood "in the context of wider British strategic interests". Professor John Davis, who is writing an account of revolutionary Naples for Oxford University Press, said he understood Italian attitudes, but "anti-British sentiment" was misplaced.

At a three-day conference on the Jacobin revolution against the Bourbon rulers of Naples in 1799, Professor Gerardo Marotta, director of the Italian Institute of Philosophical Studies in Naples, said that it was time that Nelson's true role in executing the leaders of the revolt was fully exposed.

Nelson had acted with great brutality, Professor Marotta, who describes himself as the last of the Neapolitan Jacobins, said. He added that Nelson had played a leading role in restoring the Bourbons, ending the 144-day republic by reneging on promises of safe conduct and engaging in "shame-



Nelson's fleet in the Bay of Naples in 1799. Controversy rages over his role in helping to put down an anti-monarchist uprising, tarnishing his heroic reputation, Italians claim

ful wholesale slaughter" of the rebels.

Nelson arrived in Naples in 1793 with orders to help to forge an anti-French pact with King Ferdinand I and Queen Maria Carolina, the Bourbon monarchs. His Naples years are perhaps best remembered for his passionate affair with Emma Hamilton, wife of Sir William Hamilton, the British Ambassador.

But Nelson also played a key political role: he supported the King and Queen when the French invaded early in 1799 and encouraged anti-monarchist forces

(led by disaffected noblemen) to stage a revolt.

Nelson took King Ferdinand and Queen Maria Carolina to safety in Palermo in his own flagship, and returned later to help monarchist forces led by Cardinal Fabrizio Ruffo to put down the uprising.

The conference, which is part of bicentenary celebrations marking the revolt, is being held at the Castel Sant'Elmo, the fortress on a hill above Naples where the routed revolutionaries took refuge.

Professor Davis, formerly Professor of History at Warwick University and now at Connecticut University, said that there was particular anger over the fact that the defeated rebels were encircled outside of the fortress after being assumed by Cardinal Ruffo that they would be given safe passage. "But Nelson did not feel bound by this and had them arrested the moment they emerged defenceless," he said.

Anti-Nelson feeling focuses on the fate of Admiral Francesco Caracciolo, who had served the monarchy but switched sides to back the rebels. He was sentenced to life imprison-

ment after a court martial held on Nelson's orders.

Nelson changed the sentence to death by hanging from the yardarm and refused to allow the body to be taken down until sunset. It was thrown into the sea, weighted with cannon balls. The corpse was buried after being washed up on a beach. According to some scholars, Nelson's dislike of the admiral was fuelled not only by his treachery but also by the fact that he had once slighted Lady Hamilton by refusing to dance with her.

Giuseppe Galasso, a lead-

ing Naples historian, said that Queen Maria Carolina had written to Lady Hamilton from Palermo asking her to tell Nelson to put down the revolt "as if he were crushing a rebel city in Ireland".

"He didn't need to be asked twice," Professor Galasso said. "The result has left an indelible stain on the reputation of a man whom the British regard as a hero."

Professor Davis said that he had read all of Nelson's correspondence at the time of the revolt and "I don't think he had a very clear idea of what he

was getting into in terms of the internal politics of the Bourbon kingdom. He was a naval officer of his time, with a strong sense of discipline and a firm reaction to any form of insubordination."

Professor Davis said it was true that Nelson had taken his word over safe passage for the rebels, but the previous year he had won a famous victory over French forces at the Battle of the Nile. In Niles he was guided by the broader interest of obstructing ambitions of Napoleon's France in the Mediterranean.

Japan telescope focuses on infant universe

FROM ROBERT WHYMANT
IN TOKYO

JAPANESE scientists say that a new infrared telescope, the biggest yet built, could help to solve the mystery of how life was created.

The £210 million telescope will give scientists the best view so far of the universe in its infancy, according to Motohide Tamura of Japan's National Astronomical Observatory. "What is most exciting is that we expect to be able to observe the birth of newly born galaxies," he said.

Called Subaru after the Japanese word for the star cluster

Pleiades, the telescope's large size was made possible by technological innovations. At its heart is an American-made reflector with a diameter of 8.2m (27ft), supported by Japanese computer-controlled arms to compensate for gravity and temperature variations.

The system ensures that the flexible mirror — only 20cm (8in) thick — preserves a curvature of staggering precision. If sited in London, the telescope could pinpoint and measure precisely a tennis ball in Swindon.

The telescope, equipped with a highly accurate tracking system, will be able to lo-

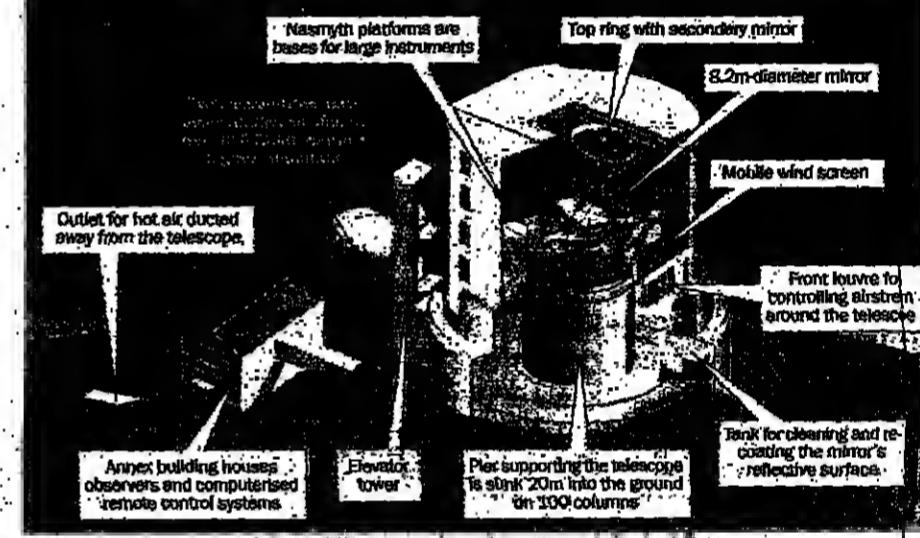
cate stars in both the visible and infra-red wavelengths, greatly extending the limits of the observable universe.

Scientists in Japan say the Subaru will out-perform America's Hubble telescope — though this has the advantage of being above the Earth's atmosphere — because it can collect more light than the space telescope. Hubble has been able to confirm hundreds of previously unknown galaxies with its reach of about ten billion light years. Subaru will be capable of focusing up to 12 billion light years away.

Professor Tamura says it will also enable scientists to observe directly planetary systems outside the solar system — the existence of which was discovered in 1995. "Until 1995 we did not know of any planetary system outside our solar system," the professor said. "But in 1995 the first example of the extrasolar planet was discovered. The next step is somehow to observe directly those kind of extrasolar planets."

Scientists are also excited by the prospect of detecting the first generation of celestial objects which cooled from the primordial gas, which are predicted to be galaxies in their initial star-forming phase. "We will not be able to see the beginnings of the universe itself, which may be 15 billion light years away, or 20 billion. But now we hope to be able to observe the infant universe," Professor Tamura said.

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The secret world of an embassy wife

No one suspected that Catherine Manning, for more than 20 years the perfect diplomatic hostess, was leading a double life.

Interview by Grace Bradberry

Catherine Manning, the wife of David Manning, the recently Ambassador to Israel, is that rare thing, a diplomatic wife happy to live in her husband's shadow. She has done it for 24 years now, apparently without complaint. But then, Catherine Manning has a dark and thrilling secret: she is an award-winning crime writer.

For 15 years, she kept this other life to herself. When in England, she would occasionally attend crime-writers' dinners, introducing herself by her nom de plume, Elizabeth Ironside. When on the diplomatic circuit, she would be queen of the canapés, mistress of the official crockery — "an English porcelain, white with a gold crest on it," she says, in her soft, trilling voice.

It was in Israel that this carefully structured plot unravelled. "I was still trying both to write and to be the Ambassador's wife, and I threw on a dress and went to a dinner. A woman asked me what I did. Eventually I told her. She said: 'Oh, I knew you were very busy because of the state of your hands.' She'd noticed that they hadn't been manicured. Of course, she had beautifully manicured nails."

Yet Catherine Manning is the sort of woman who would always look "well turned-out". We meet in a sparse, cream flat, within a grandiose apartment block in South London. Inside the vestibule, the stucco work has been restored. In short, it's oddly like an embassy. Manning does not disgrace the setting. She looks as if she might have been born in a cashmere sweater similar to the one she is wearing.

Traditionally, diplomatic wives have found a focus in their children. But as other wives fell pregnant, for Catherine that didn't happen.

"I couldn't have children," she says, carefully. "It was a source of regret and, for a time, of real sadness. But you can't spend your whole life regretting one condition. I went



Catherine Manning: all the attributes of the ideal ambassador's wife — plus a talent for concealment and crime writing

through it and came out at the other side, and left that particular thing behind."

She began writing her first novel, set in India (her husband's second foreign posting), when she was 30. "We'd just bought a house and we were completely broke," she

says. "But I did it partly to pass the time, too." Her husband parcelled up the manuscript and sent it to an agent, picked from the *Artists' and Writers' Yearbook* for no other reason than that the surname began with A. The agent quickly placed the book, and *A Very*

Private Enterprise

won the Crime Writers' Association first novel award.

Had she turned to writing to fill a void? "It might be that I started to write at a moment when really I should have . . ."

she begins. "I mean, I'd been married long enough . . . it

was quite clear that if I was going to have children, then I should have had them by then, and I wasn't going to."

One has to admire a woman who could respond to such a crushing discovery by becoming an award-winning novelist. During her husband's third posting — to Paris — she also polished off a history doctorate. Not the least formidable, and, frankly, rather shy, she is the kind of resourceful wife that Foreign Office mandarins must adore. "David is always very dedicated to his work," she says. "Which means you could spend your time twiddling your thumbs — or you could do something yourself."

The Mannings were in Moscow from 1990 to 1993. It was a scary period, though not, apparently for Catherine Manning.

"They were the best years there since 1917," she says with glee. "During August 1991, when the coup took place, I walked every day with my dog down to the barricades."

They lived in a rented house with a KGB man on the door who noted every time one went in and out. Later, people were so concerned about security they would beg to have a policeman outside their door.

During this period she wrote her second novel, *Death in the Garden*, which was shortlisted for the Crime Writers' Association Gold Dagger award. Back in England, she completed her third, *The Accomplice*, mostly about Russia. Naively, she thought that her first stint as an ambassador, in Israel, would provide her best opportunity yet to get on with her writing.

"I ought to have known better, but I started out thinking: 'This is wonderful. I'm going to an interesting country, to live in a lovely house, and

'I couldn't have children. It was a source of regret'

publishers pointed out that, in today's world, merely writing books was not enough. You had to publicise them.

I'd never had a launch party until I went to Israel. People just assume you're an ambassador's wife and that's it. It didn't bother me. But while we were in Israel, David gave a party for *The Accomplice*. He did it as a private person, and had invitations printed from David Manning, for the launch of Elizabeth Ironside's book. Lots of people came and realised that was me only when they arrived." She recounts this with the relish of a spy whose cover was never blown.

• *The Art of Deception*, by Elizabeth Ironside, New English Library, £5.99.

Starters for No 10

Many people think that just because Tony Blair promised his constituents in Sedgefield that his favourite dish is takeaway fish and chips, but has now also told compilers of *The Islington Cookbook* that he likes nothing better than "fresh fettuccine garnished with an exotic sauce of olive oil, sun-dried tomatoes and capers", then he must be some kind of shameless chameleon who changes to woo whomever he happens to be with. Well, that's certainly what I think.

But this culinary misunderstanding has made Blair anxious about his image.

Or, as he put it to Frank Bruno at a Downing Street cocktail party last night: "They're trying to stitch me up good 'n' proper, ain't it. Frankie, makin' me out to be a Zelig of the food world, like in the 'Woody Allen movie, know wo' I mean, Harry?" before turning with his other face to Michael Caine, from whom he sought some moral support by pleading: "Mike, you know me mate, I'm jis' mum 'n' dad — mad — about me fish 'n' chips. But not a lotta people know dat."

But Tony understands that the days when people changed the way they spoke simply in order to blend in with whomever they were talking to are, like, so five minutes ago. That was last year's political fashion, which Tony flaunted so flamboyantly on the *Des O'Connor Show* last June, when he told us all how he loves to play footie with "the kids" and, how, on a holiday in France, "they put on a little show for us, with the mayor of the little village".

Then Blair got a pager message from Alastair Campbell explaining that everyone speaks Estuary English now, and the latest focus group findings showed that "you are what you eat" was the new mantra on voters' lips.

This is why — whereas an American President might be followed around a crowded room by a pair of discreet bodyguards — Tony Blair, at his Downing Street cocktail parties, is accompanied by a pair of discreet waitresses.

One carries a tray of food, the other a tray of

drinks. Approaching John Prescott, say, Tony grabs himself a half of Tetley's and a cheese-and-pickle bap. As he moves on to Kate Moss, Tony's already nibbling on a rocket leaf and sipping vodka and cranberry juice, swiftly swapping this for an asparagus quiche tartlet and a Malibu and blackcurrant when it's time to get the lowdown on the world of showbiz from *Supermarket Sweep's* Dale Winton.

Because of his hectic lifestyle, Blair now employs a full-time social dietician to orchestrate his schedule in a way that enables him to blend gastronomically with whomever he happens to be dining. If you would like to try the Blair diet as part of your new year makeover, here are a few examples of what Tony eats, and in whos company:

Paddy Ashdown: With Paddy, Tony makes a point of eating neither fish nor fowl, but something in between. Like Ashdown, Tony has this week vowed to hand over the responsibility of eating food to someone else — but not for six months!

Mike Tyson: Tony likes to take a bite out of Mike's ear.

Peter Mandelson: Tony tends to choose lobster, making sure the restaurant bill is sent to Geoffrey Robinson.

John Humphrys: Blair often joins the *Today* presenter in eating a Cabinet minister for breakfast.

Robin Cook: The evening frequently ends with the two of them rolling around the floor of Chevening's drawing room, empty brandy bottles scattered about them like bowling pins.

David Owen: Anything, as long as it's between 9am and 11.30am, or 5pm to 7pm.

Richard Rogers: Tony orders seabass — just so long as all the bones have been repositioned on the outside of the fish, and the whole dish is served under a spectacular glass canopy.

Gordon Brown: With Gordon, Tony is scrupulous about cutting the cake straight down the middle, but still somehow manages to end up with the bigger half. But, hey babe, that's the way the cookie crumbles, as Tony was telling his buddy Bill Clinton only the other day.

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Send in the mercenaries, Mr Cook

Sam Kiley on why the Sierra Leone leader must not fall

Robin Cook would rather we all forgot about Sandline. The Foreign Secretary does not welcome reminders of the role played by this mercenary outfit in Sierra Leone.

Sandline may have co-operated with British diplomats to help to restore the lawfully elected President Kabba to his rightful position as Sierra Leone's head of state. But we are asked to believe, it was all without Mr Cook's knowledge. Sir Thomas Legg's inquiry cleared him of any wrongdoing, it seems. That, he hopes, is an end of it. Well, it shouldn't be.

Whether or not Sandline was implementing British policy then, it is quite clear that it should be now. The Foreign Secretary should learn from the events of last year. The redeployment of mercenaries in this blighted nation would be an act of genuinely ethical foreign policy.

Sierra Leone is once again teetering between democracy and criminal dementia. Charles Taylor, Liberia's President, is trying to take over the country with a mercenary group much more sinister than the London-based Sandline. He has hired 300 Ukrainians, along with other African dogs of war, in an effort to turn the nation into his private fiefdom.

Mr Taylor and his henchmen plan to get their hands on the country's enormously valuable resources of diamonds and rubies. They then propose to hand power to their creatures in the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, is on death row in Freetown for his past atrocities. There is a lot of competition for the title of Africa's most malignant militia, but in this crowded field the RUF stands out.

Mr Sankoh's sidekick, Sam Bodkar, is a former hairdresser and professional disco-dancer turned butcher. He joined the opportunistic RUF thugs when a lorry carrying volunteers drove past him while he was idling at an Abidjan bus stop four years ago. The antics of the RUF leaders, and their allies in the deposed junta forces, would be blackly comic in an Evelyn Waugh sense if they were not bleakly murderous on a massive scale.

Eastern Freetown has been razed by the rebels. Their scorched earth tactics and the staggering level of their atrocities blight much of this country. Yesterday the rebels were seen cutting off the hands of civilians fleeing their path. Refugees talk of wholesale slaughter by the rebels, piles of bodies in the streets, and all-night partying by drug-crazed pre-teens killers. The rebels have to be stopped, and soon.

This is where Mr Cook can salvage a little honour from the Sandline affair. This week, while the British Government continued to put pressure on President Kabba to negotiate with the rebels, British forces have been keeping a weather eye on matters. A brigadier, David Richards, carried out reconnaissance in Freetown and has returned to brief Mr

Cook's Cabinet committee. He is likely to convey the message from both Mr Kabba and his West African allies in Econog, that a ceasefire and negotiations are out of the question while the rebels hold the diamond-rich East.

It is clear that jaw-jaw will not work if the rebels are allowed to maintain their grip on the diamond mines. The gems can be mined by anyone with a shovel. The rebels can generate tens of millions of pounds to fund their massacres. Talks while the rebels remain in possession of these resources will only strengthen the rebels' hands.

What the legitimate President and his allies need is air support to hit rebel bases from the rear. Without air support, Econog's armour and infantry can fight only a limited war of attrition, unable to strike behind the rebel lines.

It is in Britain's interest to see that air support, and additional military muscle, are supplied. We have a moral duty to maintain the President whose election we backed. But this crisis affects more than one country. If the Econog forces were to lose on the battlefields of Sierra Leone, a domino effect could harm the cause of progress throughout West Africa. Nigeria's own transition to democracy would be jeopardised.

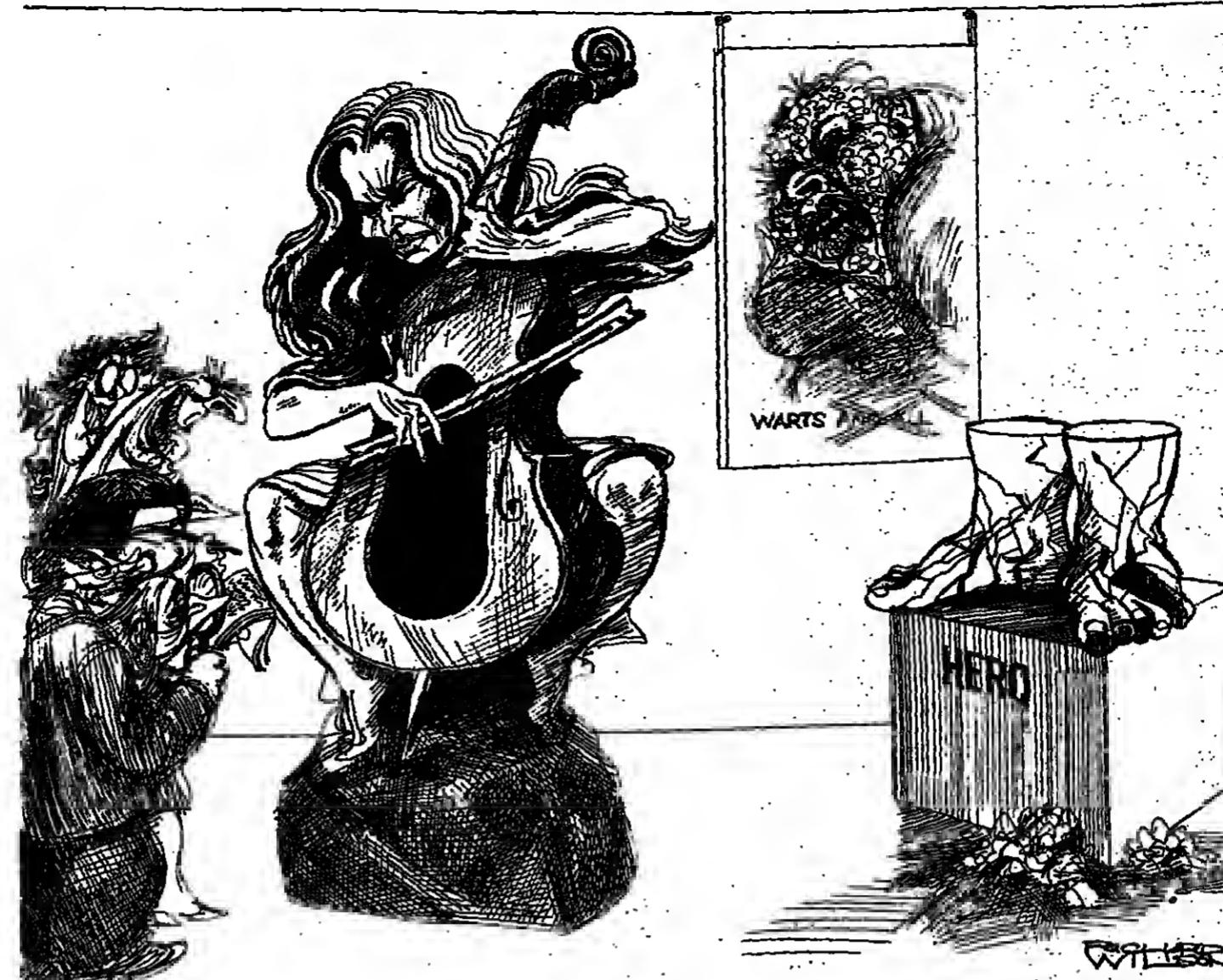
Britain cannot help directly. It does not have the type of helicopter gunships that would be useful in Sierra Leone. It is, in any case, extremely unlikely that the Government would order Crown forces straight into an African bloodfest.

But there is an alternative. In 1997, President Kabba had almost routed the rebels with the help of Executive Outcomes, a South African mercenary company. With 146 soldiers of fortune and one M124 helicopter gunship, he had all but finished them off. But pressure from abroad forced the President to cancel that contract. As the mercenaries left, they predicted that Mr Kabba's rule would last 90 days. He was ousted after 80.

Britain, and her Western partners, can now help Sierra Leone by hiring a company like Executive Outcomes. Sandline, or any one of a number of British security firms operating in Africa. Such an organisation could bring those badly-needed helicopters to fight in Freetown and beyond. The Sierra Leone Government cannot afford to do so. In all honour, we cannot afford not to.

At no risk to British soldiers and equipment, Mr Cook can practise private-sector peace-keeping. He should authorise the deployment of mercenaries to help Econog to drive the rebels out of Sierra Leone. That, after all, is what the Foreign Office thought was a good idea a year ago. This time one can only hope that Mr Cook learns from the past, instead of trying to forget it.

comment@the-times.co.uk
Mary Ann Sieghart returns next week.



The camera often lies

'True story' films should carry a Mostly Untrue certificate from the censors

I can see it already. "Paddy and Jane" is the true but tormented tale of a soldier turned politician. This Wellingtonian figure is a man of dazzling but flawed genius. Told through the eyes of his former secretary, the film uses their affair as a metaphor of political turmoil. Paddy, portrayed by Kenneth Branagh, is caught between wife and mistress, Labour and Tory. Charles Kennedy and Tony Blair. He draws on his SBS training to survive each crisis. We are assured that the sex scenes are "courageous and explicit... intended to convey a deeper kind of truth". Ten provincial reps are closed to supply the Arts Council grant.

The film *Hilary and Jackie*, initiated by the sister of Jacqueline du Pré, is a similar melodrama of rivalry and love. It is rescued from sentimentality only by Emily Watson's acting and frequent mercy dashes by Elgar. Whether the remorselessly unpleasant scenes are all true cannot be judged, since du Pré is dead. Most of her friends and admirers believe she has been defamed by an angst-ridden sister and brother-in-law. Certainly any shred of dignity or niceness has been edited out. This being a film, much is made of sex and the whole confection is called "true", a word almost devoid of meaning in movies. The film was incomprehensibly subsidised by the British taxpayer.

This is a road much trodden, and much littered with cant. Scholarly pens are sharpened over *Shakespeare in Love*, a film of Tom Stoppard's charming fiction that a randy Elizabethan poet called William Shakespeare had writers block during a play called *Romeo and Juliet*. From this he was deliciously rescued by Gwyneth Paltrow, leaving us for ever in her debt. There is no evidence that any of this happened, but so what? Stoppard makes no claim to veracity. Nor does the dazzling designer-Tudor florist, *Elizabeth*, currently on general release. Some myths are invulnerable to correction.

There is no evidence for half of history, and even less for the hack history of the film industry. *Gandhi* was a travesty of the British Raj. *Amadeus* was not about the real Mozart. *The Music Lovers* was not about the real Tchaikovsky. Closer to our time, Oliver Stone's *JFK* gave a false account of the killing of Kennedy. Jim Sheridan's *In the Name of the Father* was a false account of the Guildford Four. The

"true" portrait of C. S. Lewis in *Shadowlands* was mostly fiction. The "true story" of *Schindler's List* was unrecognisable to those who were present at the scenes depicted. The whole genre of docudrama, of faction, reconstruction and "based on" stories, treats real people and incidents as a mere raw material for directorial fancy. Yet such is the power of film that these versions will determine for ever how most people view their patch of history. Sir Thomas More will always be the *Man for All Seasons*.

The film-makers blow a raspberry to any complaint. We are artists, they cry. We can use facts any way we like. They are slaves to our talent, workers to be exploited and discarded. The monstrous regimentment of historians, fact-checkers and pedants can get lost. Art need recognise no laws but those of its own genius. "What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth." Or as Keats would have said today, you can whinge, we have the Arts Council grant.

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I once wrote an article in which I unwittingly told an untruth about a public figure. I had suggested that he was present at a meeting when he was not, and thus wrongly attributed to him an unworthy decision. The accusation was not grievous and no great harm was done. But it was wrong. Both the law and the code of practice required me to apologise and make amends. Even when raising the clock, journalists must build on a foundation of truth. I might have dismissed the complaint on the ground that mine was a work of art. I might have pleaded that my prose strove not after a spurious and small-minded accuracy, but after the "divine melodious truth" of the nightingale that is forever Fleet Street. I would have been carried off to the Clinic.

Carlton was recently fined an

astonishing £2 million by the Independent Television Commission for including fabricated material in a documentary on drug trafficking. "The deception," said the ITC, "involved a wholesale breach of trust between the programme-makers and the viewers." The company did not disagree, gulped and paid up. Film journalists who make offerings at the altar of history are tested by stern standards. Not so feature film-makers. I venture to suggest that if Carlton had sent its work round to

Channel 4 and claimed it to be a "true-story" art film, it would not have been fined for fabrication, but showered with praise and lottery cash.

The cobbler should stick to his last. Art's contribution to history is to reveal its hidden strands through the prism of fiction. The wrongs of British policy in Northern Ireland were more effectively exposed in *The Crying Game* by Mr Sheridan's Guildford Four faction. The best study of Watergate was the

fictional *Washington Behind Closed Doors*; not the many films depicting Nixon as a monster and purveyors of lies from the rooftops. By all means let *Hilary* give her version of her sister's sad tale, if she must. By all means add in the sex, the profanity, the terminal illness and Elgar's Cello Concerto. If they are the only means to an audience. By all means call the product art. But the rest of us need stand on the ceremony of that art. Truth comes first. If film-makers claim a licence to damn the living and the dead, they must get damnation in return.

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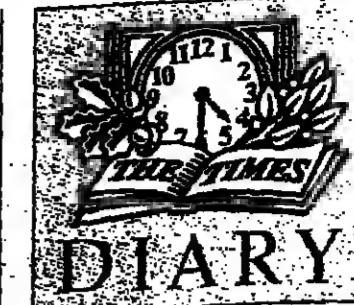
Carlton documentary. They used fabricated scenes and dialogue, intercut with documentary footage, to imply as fact what they knew was fiction. Such falsity was said in both cases to be avoidably propagandist, to expose the falsity of others. These artists demand a licence to expose the lies of others. This is the ultimate *trahison des clercs*. In my view the same goes for the portrayal of du Pré as a genius of unredeemed naivety.

When art has exhausted its imaginative powers and has to borrow real people from real life, it should accept the disciplines of history and journalism. These are not only the laws of libel, but codes and protocols of accuracy, fairness and respect for individuals, both living and dead. Of course journalism often falls far short of these disciplines, but it at least acknowledges a framework of self-discipline. Film-makers respect nothing. Constrained only by laws against defaming living persons (letting Daniel Barenboim off the *Hilary and Jackie* hook), they can be with impunity and without redress.

Art's rejoinder to this purism is to cry censorship! It depends what we mean by the censor, a wolf who comes in many disguises. The ITC was censoring Carlton in fitting it for its drugs story. The laws of libel and racial and religious discrimination are censorship. So too are those controlling copyright, advertising and public deception. On this basis alone—the British Board of Film Classification should surely demand the removal of the words "true story" from films which are blatantly nothing of the sort. At very least, it should have a new MCU certificate, meaning Mostly Untrue.

Yet censorship is not the best defence against artistic mendacity, it is the worst. The best defence is to decimate its lies from the rooftops. By all means let *Hilary* give her version of her sister's sad tale, if she must. By all means add in the sex, the profanity, the terminal illness and Elgar's Cello Concerto. If they are the only means to an audience. By all means call the product art. But the rest of us need stand on the ceremony of that art. Truth comes first. If film-makers claim a licence to damn the living and the dead, they must get damnation in return.

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Baby reds

BABY BALLS are to be taken to the heart of the Labour Establishment. Its most glamorous couple are about to embark on the founding of a dynasty. Yvette Cooper (right) wife of Ed Balls, Gordon Brown's sharpshooter, is expecting in June.

The MP is the latest "Blairite" to reproduce. She follows Claire Curtis-Thomas, Debra Shipton, Jacqui Smith and Ruth Kelly (left). Yvette purrs: "This year is going to be big for Ed and me. We are really pleased. The only problem is I couldn't drink much over Christmas to celebrate."

Ever a power person, Cooper has told her local party she will campaign in the European elections until she drops. Poor baby.



• **KATE THORNTON** of Top of the Pops pedigree has attacked gentle Cheltenham. She suggests that the tweed town is really home for white trash. "Not being pregnant by 14 made me stand out," she says. "I suffered bullying. When I go back home I live past those people in my nice car. I see them pushing their buggies and I think 'Well, who's the smart one?'."

Tory benefit

KNOW a Conservative in need? A fund for distressed Tory folk is being wound up by Sir Archibald Hamilton's 1922 Committee. The search has started for worthy final recipients and as the party lost 171 seats last time there could be a few takers. The fund was established in 1975 "to help former Tory members and their surviving spouses who find themselves in difficulty".

Marion Roe, MP, chief pension officer, says: "The House has its own arrangements now. We are looking to distribute the balance, so anyone who knows of worthy causes, contact us." Make the queue orderly now, please.

• **A PORTRAIT** of Hitler by that thirsty dog, Sir Nicholas Fairbairn, is being flogged by his widow. It's a riot of missing features mired in yellow and blue. Lady Sam became chief beneficiary of Nicky's will on his deathbed, at the expense of his daughters. Lady S is to emigrate to Mexico having enjoyed a stint in a drying-out clinic. Life threatens to be economical: the work should raise £60.



Euro stars?

WILL the Ashdowns join that other couple in Brussels who never made it, the Khanocks? Tony Blair, I hear, has suggested to Paddy that should he want Sir Leon Brittan's job at the Euro Commission, it is his. Although one of the Brussels sinecures normally goes to a Tory, it is not obligatory.

Also uncertain about his future is Alan Beith. He has campaigned discreetly to replace Betty Boothroyd as Speaker. After Wednesday's news, he made it clear that "now is not the time" to discuss the succession—code, I feel, for "I'm mad for it".

• **UNLIKELY cronies** Alan Clark tells me he "adores" that gentle soul Alastair Campbell and thinks "he should be PM". Well, he almost is. The admiration is returned. Campbell has been heard to say that he knows what the Tories think as he's spoken to Al—the only one with a brain".

Odd couple

SHOULD be fun to see how Lord Wakeham and Gerald Kaufman rub along on the Lords Royal Commission. The two clashed a year ago when Gerald ventured that John was a "slovenly" while Wakeham said the MP was "an expert at offensive remarks".

JASPER GERARD

'Proud, patriotic, high-minded and diligent — unmistakably British down to his bowler hat and blazer'

Defining what makes Brits British is the latest trivial pursuit for politicos. An historical criterion for Britishness uses things that we are all supposed to do together, such as bumping on horseback after foxes, despising the French and hating the Pope. We might call this the unification principle. But its flaw is that today at least as many Brits shudder at fox-hunters, admire the French and revere the Pope.

A better criterion for Britishness is the insularity principle. This selects the things that Britons do that nobody else in the world would dream of copying, like cold baths in midwinter, regimental blazers with brass buttons and opening the bedroom window at night, especially when there is a freezing gale. Such as:

I. Bread pudding. We find this mess of bread, hot milk, and

cubes essential for eating with birds. Nobody else in the world agrees with us.

2. There are many similar national delicacies that define Britishness: Marmite, kippers, plum pudding, fish and chips soaked in vinegar, mushy peas, bloaters, mint sauce with lamb, "Gentleman's relish" and all other such fish pastes, pork scratchings, powdered custard, digestives biscuits half covered in chocolate.

3. Lesser breeds celebrate Christmas with *foie gras* and oysters. Chateaubriand and venison, and other unsensual foods. Americans eat their native bird for Thanksgiving, cooked with style and cranberries. Only the British love the cordon-bleu for Christmas with chipolata sausages and Brussels sprouts.

4. Only the British guzzle Brussels sprouts. Not even the

Belgians will touch them.

5. It is a cliché that Britons drink beer at room temperature while standing up. But if we do secure a stool at the bar, it is our custom to spread our elbows and conversation to block anyone else from approaching the bar to give his order. More

authoritarian countries would arrange to serve beer at tables, or at least palm off of the bar red to keep it clear for orders.

6. Of course Britons invented team sports and games. Other nations are better at them today. A surprising number of them play cricket. But we are unrivalled at the stupidity, cheating and venality of our sportsmen, the egos, bungs and incompetence of our sports administrators, and the tribal behaviour of supporters. The only sports that nobody in the world bothers to play other than us is croquet.

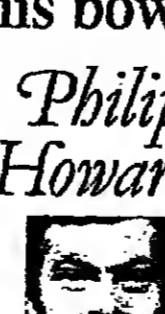
7. Pantomime is alien to aliens. It may be descended from the *commedia dell'arte* and echo the last enchantments of the music hall. But it has declined a long way from them. Foreigners find pantomime absurd, coarse, distasteful and incomprehensible.

8. Who but the British would pay even a penny for crackers? What sentient being enjoys wearing a paper hat reading a pathetic motto, blowing a whistle, throwing streamers and receiving a "free gift" of plastic of no ascertainable purpose?

9. Other nations send their naughty children to boarding school and regard teaching as a noble profession. The British send away their richest, most privileged and most socially upwardly mobile little darlings.

10. Only the Brits would dream of wearing bowler hats (mainly in Ulster these days, with rolled umbrella). Ulster, scratchy tweed knickerbockers, green (now yellow) wellies, club ties of distasteful colours such as MCC, and collar pins. These are all intended as marks of tribal distinction. They show that the wearer belongs to something, and more important, that you are excluded. Englishwomen wear tweed nightdresses to show that bed is for the serious business of snoring on a hot water bottle, not for decadent continental hanky-panky.

11. At his best the Briton can be high-minded, diligent, patriotic,



12. It is remarkable that no other nations copy us in these or other insular particularities, such as the peacock and the horribly unfair custom of primogeniture. But that is their bad luck. The banal conclusion to the popular quest for Britishness is that our mongrel peoples include every peculiarity under the sun. That foreigners are odd. Shakespeare defined us: "England, hedged in with the main." That water-walled bulwark still secures and protects from foreign purposes. . . . There is the Channel now. And we have become less xenophobic. Some of us can like foreigners, even if they are not wallets or oil

لهم اصلح ما في مصر



THE POTENT TAXPAYER

Viagra sparks a welcome debate on who pays for what

A diamond-shaped blue pill has stimulated a long overdue debate about the National Health Service. By proposing that the anti-impotence drug Viagra should be restricted to men with serious disabilities, the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, has implicitly accepted what others have long acknowledged: treatments provided by the NHS need to be rationed by means beyond that of the waiting list. A Health Secretary is now openly meddling with doctors' freedom to prescribe according to clinical need. He is limiting patients' universal right to free treatment. For this Mr Dobson deserves praise. Instead of protesting, the medical profession should help Mr Dobson to devise new, fresh ideas about how to fund the NHS and meet public demand.

A worthwhile debate demands candour. As recently as Monday Mr Dobson stated that treatment is given "according to individual need, not a preordained entitlement" — a view to which yesterday's decision runs counter. Doctors should acknowledge that, as there are not limitless resources to fund the NHS, setting priorities is necessary. The question is who should set them, and on what terms? Are contraceptives, or treatments to tackle obesity, to be classed as "lifestyle drugs", despite the public and medical good they may bring? And who is in a position to ordain that a man with six months to live should not be given an expensive new drug that might give him another year of life on the ground of cost alone?

These decisions are already being taken in a confused, chaotic manner and behind closed Whitehall and health authority doors. So-called "postcode prescribing", where a treatment is available under one health authority but not another, appears to be an established practice. In East Norfolk, doctors are allowed to prescribe a drug for motor neurone disease that can

prolong sufferers' lives by three to six months. In neighbouring Suffolk, patients have to pay for it themselves. Universality of provision may be a good political catch-phrase but it rings hollow in a growing number of regions.

The emergence of new drugs and the genetics revolution threaten to exacerbate this problem. The Government hopes to pass other difficult decisions to the new National Institute for Clinical Excellence. This body's task is to iron out inconsistencies in health provision by judging whether new drugs should be available on the NHS on the grounds of efficacy, and then provide national clinical guidance. While national guidelines will be welcome, decisions affecting patients will be taken by remote government advisers, not doctors or surgeons. Ministers cannot expect that this new quango will address the fundamental *commodum: however much taxpayers' money is spent on health, the public's expectations will never be met. Rationing cannot be addressed by ministers wondering "how can we provide the best service?" Instead, they should be asking "What is the public prepared to pay for and how?"*

Mr Dobson should consider health systems in other countries, where people are required to pay for some or all of their treatment depending on medical need: serious illnesses are treated free, while inessential drugs must be paid for. The Government should encourage individuals to take more responsibility for their own well-being by encouraging private medical insurance. In a more transparent system, where people are insured against misfortune, the prospect of paying for prescriptions is less likely to provoke such dismay. So long as the public is shielded from the true costs of treatment, the demands on the NHS will go on soaring, leaving Mr Dobson impotent to respond.

JUST JUDGES

Zimbabwe's courts take liberty's side against torturers

The illegal detention and torture of two Zimbabwean journalists by the military is chilling. The Government of President Mugabe has never been tolerant of dissent. But it seems increasingly ready to use unlawful intimidation against its growing number of critics. Yet the journalists' appalling treatment has also elicited vigorous protest from churches, unions and intellectuals and brought out the best in the country's civil institutions, notably the courts. Mark Chavunduka, the Editor of Zimbabwe's leading independent newspaper, *The Standard*, and Ray Choto, a senior *Standard* reporter, probably owe their lives to the perseverance of their publisher, Clive Wilson, and their lawyer, and to the determination of two brave judges to uphold the law.

The two men still face trial, under a section of the 1960 Law and Order Maintenance Act framed under white rule with the express purpose of suppressing freedom of speech, for causing "alarm and despondency". All charges should now be dropped. The journalists have been subjected to hideous tortures, including electric shocks, burns, beatings and the "submarine" method of water suffocation. The accuracy or otherwise of the *Standard's* news report, by which both stand, that 23 soldiers had been arrested for inciting others to a military coup is a minor matter compared with the flagrant contempt of court shown not only by the military who detained them, but by Moven Mahachi, Zimbabwe's powerful Defence Minister.

Under Zimbabwean law, civilians suspected of an offence can be arrested only by the police, who must grant them access to a lawyer and their family and produce them in court to be charged within 48 hours. Last Thursday, two days after Mr Chavunduka

was detained by the military and held incommunicado, Judge George Smith ruled in the High Court that the military had no jurisdiction over him and ordered his release. The Defence Ministry refused, handing him over to police custody only on Monday, after Judge James Devitt announced that if he was not brought to court, he would order the arrest of Mr Mahachi and his principal aide that night. When Mr Choto then came out of hiding to give himself up to the police, the military seized both men and tortured them continuously for 24 hours in an attempt to force them to divulge their sources.

Mr Choto believed his torturers when they told him that the President had signed his death warrant. What all Zimbabweans believe is that Mr Mahachi, who is close to Mr Mugabe, would not have defied the courts unless he believed that he had the President's approval. Mr Mugabe keeps his Cabinet on a tight rein. Many will also believe that the news report must have had real substance to provoke so extreme a reaction. This has not been confined to *The Standard*: police in the southern town of Masvingo have arrested an officer of the feared Central Intelligence Organisation for beating up journalists in three news organisations. The ill-paid military's discontent, which common knowledge has been sharpened by its heavy casualties in the deeply unpopular Zimbabwean military intervention in Congo's civil war.

President Mugabe's only credible course now is to dismiss his Defence Minister, court-martial the soldiers concerned and drop all charges against *The Standard*. Unless he disowns this disgraceful act, he will be indefinitely associated with it, and his *fin de régime* will become more unstable and threatening than it already is.

WORLD WIDE HONOUR

The new and lasting memorial of the Web

When they were buried, their memory was kept alive by the most enduring means known to man — with simple lettering in stone above their graves. Line after line of such headstone is ranged in French and Belgian war cemeteries. Where there was once mud, rubble and blood, there are now some of the world's most poignant resting places, where Commonwealth soldiers who fell in two world wars lie buried. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission promised that "their name liveth for evermore". But time and distance have separated families from the records of their long-fallen loved ones.

The commission has now made imaginative use of a new and unexpected tool for tracing and remembering those who fell, the Internet. Since the Debt of Honour Register was posted on the net just before Armistice Day, more than four million people have visited the site. The commission has been flooded with follow-up inquiries. In the first ten days alone, some 250,000 people from all over the world sought details of relatives and long-fallen friends. Interest has also been stimulated by the recent wave of books and films about the First World War, the moving interviews with the last members of the generation that fought in the trenches and the last November's commemorations of the 80th anniversary of the Armistice.

The Commonwealth War Graves Com-

mission has deservedly earned praise over the years for the meticulous care with which it tends the graves of 1.78 million soldiers who lie in 3,000 foreign fields in some 150 countries. When it was established, it took the early and controversial decision that in the remembrance of death all are equal. No family was allowed to purchase a larger plot, no Briton to have a better headstone than a subject soldier from the Empire, no officer to be marked out from his men.

The commission's Internet site has properly preserved this spirit. Each entry has the same format, dignity and accompanying history. Each upholds the promise to "defeat the oblivion of time". History best comes alive when it touches human lives. Family history is often lost in a modern world where neighbourhoods are more likely to change and younger generations less likely to keep in touch. Family Bibles are rarer and parish records less comprehensive. Yet the need to trace our roots is as strong as ever. So, too, is the yearning to unravel the mysteries of how missing relatives died and what happened to the uncles and grandfathers who went to war and never returned. Searches that used to take years are now possible in a trice; questions can be answered and pride in sacrifice rekindled. For this, as for its unstinting work in tending the dead, the commission deserves high praise.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

MEPs' power and will to censure the Commission

From Mr Roy Perry, MEP for Wight and Hampshire South (European People's Party Group (Conservative))

Sir, The analysis by William Rees-Mogg of the role played by Labour MEPs, most especially Pauline Green, in actually saving the present European Commission was particularly sharp (article, January 18; see also letters, January 16). Mrs Green indeed said at the very outset that she tabled a censure motion with the intention to vote against it. No one can be surprised that she ultimately applied the tactic of withdrawing her motion.

However, Mr Blair has another option to show whether he really believes Mme Cresson or Senior Marin have fallen short of the standards expected of them. Under Clause 160 of the Treaty of Rome the Council may apply to the European Court of Justice to compulsorily refer a commissioner. That is a power so far denied to the Parliament.

It is a pity that, unlike the European Parliament which is at least open in its processes, the Council of Ministers is totally closed and we need never know whether Tony Blair or any of the other ministers has the courage to make such a move.

Yours faithfully,
ROY J. PERRY,
Tarrants Farmhouse, West Wellow,
Romsey, Hampshire SO15 6DA.

From Mrs Pauline Latham

Sir, I was in Strasbourg for the whole of last week, shadowing the Conservative MEP, Giles Chichester. I witnessed at first hand not only an MEP's way of life but also what happened during the week, culminat-

ing in the vote on Thursday on whether to censure the Commission.

National governments did indeed put enormous pressure on their MEPs not to vote for the motion of censure. The Socialist group in the European Parliament, led by British Labour MEP, Pauline Green, withdrew rather than upset their friends.

The resolve of the Conservative MEPs, led by Edward McMillan-Scott, did not waver. They voted for censure because they do not believe that fraud and mismanagement should be condoned.

I'm sure that, if voters think that our Labour MEPs are happy to sweep things under the carpet, they will re-examine their loyalties at the European elections in June and prefer to endorse the decisive, clear line on fraud demonstrated by the Conservative MEPs.

Yours faithfully,
PAULINE LATHAM
(Prospective Conservative European Parliamentary Candidate for the East Midlands,
Hivers Wood, Vicarage Lane,
Little Eaton, Derby DE2 1EA.)

From Mr Peter R. Wiles

Sir, The European Parliament had an opportunity to widen its powers and control over the Commission last week, and flunked it.

The Government is busy ensuring that we voters won't have the opportunity to vote for MEPs who may take a more robust line in future. Our best riposte is to let the next lot be elected on a turnout of under 10 per cent. Members of political parties might want to drag themselves to the polling booths to vote for their party's list, but

they will be few and far between.

Yours faithfully,

N. A. SHELMERDINE,
Bracken St, Catherines,
Hook Heath, Woking,
Surrey GU22 0HW.

January 18.

From Mr Norman Shermidine

Sir, The British Government should immediately stop all financial payments to the Commission until such time as adequate controls are in force.

The problem would soon be resolved, especially if other similar-minded countries follow our lead.

Yours faithfully,

JUDITH CALVER,
Editor, *The Professional Nanny*,
Admiral House,
66-68 East Smithfield, E1 9XK.
judith.calver@cernet.co.uk

January 19.

Voluntary code to check on nannies

*From the Editor of
The Professional Nanny*

Sir, Before their experiences with a bulimic Australian nanny, "Why parents must be wary", January 19, Joe Joseph's family had employed a string of wonderfully reliable nannies and this one's immediate predecessor had been "brilliant". However, it was the problems of this one nanny that merited publicity — good nannies are simply not newsworthy.

The Government's newly announced voluntary code will only go some way towards boosting nannies' status. A Quimark will be awarded to agencies which guarantee to interview nannies face-to-face and check their CVs and references — formalising a procedure many agencies already insist on and good nannies that are more than happy to submit to.

The fact remains that many parents still either do not use agencies or employ inappropriate forms of childcare, such as an au pair or mother's help, to do a nanny's job. When something goes wrong the press is once again full of "nanny from hell" stories.

This does not, of course, diminish the sheer silliness of the Sullivan case, nor of any other case where a child is damaged by her carer. Most nannies, however, see themselves as professionals and despair of the way in which their profession is portrayed in the media.

Yours faithfully,
JUDITH CALVER,
Editor, *The Professional Nanny*,
Admiral House,
66-68 East Smithfield, E1 9XK.
judith.calver@cernet.co.uk

January 19.

Du Pré film

From Mr John Burgess

Sir, There needs to be no special pleading by Julian Lloyd Webber and his co-signatories on behalf of the late Jacqueline du Pré (letter, January 20; features, January 21). Her contribution to music is quite unsullied and fortunately available for all to hear; her sex life and character, although possibly colourful and flawed respectively, are not relevant to her musicality or lifetime achievement.

However, musicians, particularly those with a high public profile, run the same risks as politicians in conducting their private lives. They should beware of the risks they run and either moderate their behaviour, or take the appropriate precautions to ensure continuing confidentiality.

I remain, Sir,
yours faithfully,
JOHN BURGESS,
65 Ham Close, Holt,
Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA1 4PY.
jburgess@btconnect.com

January 20.

*From the Chief Executive
of Film Four Ltd*

Sir, Julian Lloyd Webber and others object in their letter today to the portrayal of Jacqueline du Pré in the film *Hilary and Jackie*. This organisation co-financed the film, and our records indicate that four of the six signatories have not actually seen it.

I would suggest that people make their own minds up as to the quality, success and, in particular, tone of the film rather than be swayed by the prejudices of others.

Yours etc,
PAUL WEBSTER,
Chief Executive, Film Four Ltd,
124 Horseferry Road, SW1P 2TX.

January 20.

After Ashdown

*From Mr Rhodri Morgan, MP
for Cardiff West (Labour)*

Sir, Following the departure of Paddy Ashdown as its leader (reports and leading article, January 21), can we expect that the Liberal Democrat Party under his successor will change its policy of "constructive opposition" to the Government to one of destructive co-operation?

Yours,
RHODRI MORGAN,
House of Commons.
January 21.

Chambers wit

From Ms Helen Grayson

Sir, My favourite entry in *Chambers* letters, January 12, 18, and 19 is the one for Japanese cedar: "A very tall Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*) often dwarfed by Japanese gardeners."

Yours faithfully,
HELEN GRAYSON,
39 St James Terrace,
Horsforth, Leeds LS18 5QT.
hegrayson@cix.compulink.co.uk

From Mr Adam Ogilvie-Smith

Sir, My edition of *Chambers Dictionary* notes that a picture restorer is someone who "cleans and restores and sometimes ruins old pictures".

Yours faithfully,
ADAM OGILVIE-SMITH,
Hyde House, Longworth,
Oxfordshire OX13 5HH.
January 21.

'Shaming' of doctor

From Dr Robert M. H. LeFever

Sir, I am no defender of doctors. Next week I am giving evidence to the General Medical Council in the case of a doctor against whom I myself have brought a complaint for malpractice.

However, I am concerned by the case of Dr William Cuthbert (report, January 20) who was "named and shamed" by the Commons Public Administration Select Committee. He has already expressed deep remorse for his error of clinical judgment in this particular case and has apologised several times. What more do they want? The end of his career?

Sincerely,
ROBERT LEFEVER,
2a Pelham Street, SW3 7HU.

January 20.

Lessons on longevity

training. The worship of the calendar extends to relatively trivial fields.

Professor Tom Kirkwood expresses some concern about his eyesight. Your photograph suggests that he is short-sighted; even so, in a few years he may need reading glasses, and it is very probable that they will not be prescribed on the basis of his visual need but on his chronological age.

The key to this is a set of tables based on outdated and heavily criticised data obtained by an American eye specialist during the first quarter of this century. When Professor Kirkwood starts needing reading glasses, and is asked his age, his reply should be that he has forgotten.

Yours very truly,
R. A. WEALE,
King's College London,
Cornwall House,
Waterloo Road, SE1 8WA.

January 12.

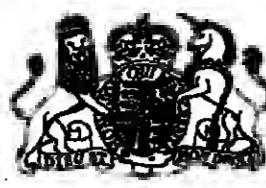
From Mr O. S. Knowles

Sir, Your leading article contained much that needed saying.

Laurens van der Post — who as an Afrikaner had no particular reason to love the British — described the British Empire as the nearest to a Platonic system of government that the world has ever seen. This verdict was largely earned by a small body of men who maintained a remarkably high standard of integrity and led from the front.

Christianity, justice, democracy,

education, journalism and advances in medicine, as well as political and economic development, were all part of the legacy. In Uganda, for example, we ruled for only 68 years from the



COURT CIRCULAR

BUCKINGHAM PALACE
January 21: The Prince Edward, President, The Children's Film Unit, this afternoon attended a Lunch at Saachi and Sashi Cause Connection, 80 Charlotte Street, London W1.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE
January 21: The Princess Royal, Colonel, The Blues and Royals, this morning visited Hyde Park

Today's royal engagements

The Princess Royal will visit Philip Carr Marketing, Long Rock, Penzance, Cornwall, 11.00; will visit the Humphry Davy School, Coombe Road, Penzance, 10.45 and will open new buildings, one St Julian's Hospital, St Michael's Hospital, Trellisick Road, Hayle, at noon; will open the Centre for Foundation Studies at Cornwall College, Pool, Redruth, at 1.15; and will visit Classic Cottages, Leslie House, Lady Street, Helston, at 2.30.

The Duke of Kent, as president, Royal Institution of Great Britain, will attend the evening discourse by Professor Susan Greenfield at 21 Albemarle Street, London W1, at 8.00.

Robert Armitage

A service of thanksgiving for the life of Robert Armitage will be held at Christ Church, Chelsea on Thursday, January 28, 1999, at noon.

Barracks, Knightsbridge, London SW1.

Her Royal Highness, President of Patrons, Crime Concern, today attended the Fru Youth Action Luncheon, Prudential, 142 Holborn Bars, London EC1.

KENSINGTON PALACE
January 21: The Duke of Gloucester this afternoon visited AJEX Housing Association at AJEX House, Stamford Hill, London N16.

Birthdays today

Viscount Beaconsfield, 49; Miss Mary Hayley Bell (Lady John) Mills, playwright, 88; Mr Nigel Penn, boxer, 35; Admiral Sir Lindsay Bryson, 74; Lord Cottingham, 72; Sir John Cotton, former diplomat, 93; Sir Charles Davis, former Counsel to the Speaker, 93; Sir Simon Day, farmer, 64; Mr George Foreman, boxer, 61; Miss Margaret Hall, head of design, British Museum, 63; Professor Cyril Hogarth, physician, 75; Lord Hughes, 88; Mr John Hunt, actor, 59; Mr John Last, 82; Mr Alfred Lockwood, 75; Mr Richard O'Connor, former company secretary, Post Office, 52; Sir Alfred Ramsey, former manager, England's World Cup football team, 79; Mrs Claire Rayner, writer and broadcaster, 68; Mrs Gillian Shepherd, MP, 59; Sir Michael Spicer, MP, 56; Mr William Sprat, former Headmaster, Leighton Park School, 78; Sir Hilary Tubb, former High Court judge, 87; Lord Wardington, 75; Sir Graham Wilkins, former chairman, Thorn EMI, 75.

Dinners

Institute of Physics
Sir Gareth Roberts, FRS, President of the Institute of Physics, presided at the annual awards dinner held last night at the Savoy Hotel. Mr David Ponter, Chairman of Pion, was the principal guest and speaker. Afterwards the president presented the institute's medals and prizes for 1998 to:

Professor G.E. Bacon, CPhys, FInstP; Dr J. Fardhaw, CPhys, MInstP; Professor J.E. Harris, FRoyMetSoc; CPhys, FInstP; Dr T.G. Harvey, CPhys, MInstP; Professor P.L. Knight, CPhys, FInstP; Professor C.H. Llewellyn Smith, CPhys, FInstP; Professor I.C. Macdonald, CPhys, FInstP; Professor M.R. Watson, CPhys, FInstP.

Honorary Fellowships were bestowed upon Professor A.J. Leggett, FRS, and Sir Roger Penrose, FRS. Among others present were Lord Flowers, FRS, and Lady Flowers; Lord Davies, FRS, and Lady Davies; Sir Alan King, FRS, and Lady King; Dr Denis Wilson, FRS, and Lady Moore; Lady Penrose, Sir Brian Pippard, FRS, Sir Richard Sykes, Dr Denis Wilson, Dr Denis Wilson, FRS, and Lord Wilkinson.

The Master of the Company of Scientific Instrument Makers, the President of the Society for the Protection of the Rights of Deaf Physicists, Giesebrecht, the Chief Executive of EPSRC, the President of the Institution of Chemical Engineers, the

President of the Institute of Acoustics, the First Councillor at the German Embassy, the Executive Secretary of CSTD, the Director of the Royal Institution, the Chief Executive of PPARC, the President and Secretary General of the Royal Society of Chemistry, the Chairman of Sera British Science, the President of the Institution of Civil Engineers, the President of the Royal Society of Physics & Engineering in Medicine, the President of the Institute of Measurement and Control and the President of the Royal Astronomical Society.

Securitas Institute

Mr Graham Ross Russell, Chairman of the Securities Institute, presided at a dinner of the institute held last night at the Charlecote in honour of Mr Tim Nicholson, a former chief executive.

Chambers of Andrew Thompson & David Gay

The Chambers of Andrew Thompson & David Guy held a dinner in the Middle Temple on January 15 to mark the 90th Birthday of His Honour Thomas Dewar (January 5) whose health was proposed by Alan Tyrell, QC. His Honour responded and other members of chambers spoke.

Appointments

Sir Edward Heath, KG, MP, and Mr Richard Baker are to be Patrons of the St Albans International Organ Festival.

Green Howards ask American rebels for their silver back

By PAUL WILKINSON

ONE of the British Army's oldest infantry units is seeking the return of lost regimental silverware, looted by American rebels during the War of Independence more than 200 years ago.

The Green Howards believe that part of the collection might still survive on show in the homes of descendants of the colonists who rebelled against King George III.

The regimental museum at its base in Richmond, North Yorkshire, contains nothing which predates the Revolutionary War, even though the unit was formed in 1688. It has now enlisted the help of an American lawyer to trace the missing silverware.

Roger Chapman, a retired major who is the museum's development officer, said: "It would be nice if it could be traced and returned, but realistically this is just a research project to find out if it still exists and where it is."

The plate, vases and trophies, along with a payroll of \$100 silver dollars and chests containing the personal valuables of the officers, was in the regiment's baggage train as it forced its way through inhospitable marshlands in South Carolina. Known then as the 19th Regiment of Foot, it had only recently arrived in America as part of a force sent to relieve the garrison at Fort Star, north of the state capital, Charleston.

The present title was adopted in 1921, although it originated in the 1740s as a nickname when units took their names from their commanding officer. They were dubbed Howard's Greens after the green facings of their scarlet uniform tunic, to differentiate them from the 3rd Foot which also had a colonel called Howard. As the 3rd's facings were buff they became Howard's Buffs, later immortalised in the phrase "Steady the Buffs".

After the battle some of the

officers' personal possessions were returned, but the cash and the regimental silver were never seen again. Major Chapman said: "We have very little information about the event, how it was seized, what exactly was taken. The problem is that the ship carrying the dispatches from the time was attacked on its journey back across the Atlantic and the information was thrown overboard to stop it falling into the Americans' hands."

Now Major Chapman has asked Dr Robert Black, a personal friend and Carolina lawyer who has lectured at the Charleston military academy, to investigate.

Dr Black said: "Everyone in South Carolina is very proud of any 18th-century links they may have. They proudly display old documents and pictures on the 'Heritage Wall' in their homes. I know quite a few families which have ancestors who fought in the campaigns that the Green Howards took part in, and it's quite possible they will know something about the incident when the baggage train was ambushed. Who knows, they may even have some of the silver in their bank vaults."

The Green Howards are one of the few remaining units of the British Army which have never been amalgamated with another regiment.

The regiment had won a victory over rebels at Monck's Corner, but on July 16, 1781, as it returned to Charleston, it was ambushed by American patriots under the command of General Thomas Sumter, a local hero after whom Fort Sumter was later named. He was famous for his leadership against the British and known as "The Carolina Gamecock".

After the battle some of the

Admiral Arthur Phillip

The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayor, accompanied by Mr Sheriff and Mrs Brian Harris, attended the annual Admiral Arthur Phillip commemoration service held yesterday at St Mary-le-Bow, Cheapside. Admiral Peter Gadsden, Chairman of the Board of Admiralty, Royal Naval Trust and President of the Australia and New Zealand Chamber of Commerce (UK), read the lesson. Mr David Wickham, Archivist of the Clothworkers' Company, gave an address. The Deputy High Commissioner for Australia was among those present. A luncheon was held afterwards at Grocers' Hall.

Meeting

Plumbers' Company
Mr Edward Hopkinson, Master of the Plumbers' Company, presented the Lili Sara Barber Memorial Gold Medal for 1998 to plumbing student Mr Peter Johnston of Carlisle College at a meeting held yesterday at Ironmongers' Hall. The Master also presented the Armed Services Award to the best student qualifying in plumbing, as recommended by the Commandant of the Royal School of Military Engineering, Chatham, to Lance Corporal T. Purvisingham, Thame, Secretary-General of the UN 1961-71, Pantawau, Burma, 1909.

Anniversaries

BIRTHS Francis Bacon, Viscount St Albans, Lord Chancellor 1618-21, London, 1561; André Marie Ampère, physicist, Lyons, 1775; George Gordon Byron, 6th Baron Byron, poet, London, 1788; August Strindberg, dramatist, Stockholm, 1849; D.W. Griffith, film director, Foydock, Kentucky, 1875; U Thant, Secretary-General of the UN 1961-71, Pantawau, Burma, 1909.

DEATHS William Patterson, founder and founder of the Bank of England, London, 1709; Charles Keast, ironmaster, London, 1808; Sir Joseph Whitworth, industrialist and engineer, Monic Carlo, 1857; Carlo Pellegrini, the cartoonist, 1898; Sir Isaac Pitman, inventor of shorthand system, Bath, 1857; Walter Sickert, painter, Bath, 1942; Lyndon B. Johnson, 36th American President 1963-69, San Antonio, Texas, 1973; The Accession of Edward VII, 1901; The UK, Irish Republic and Denmark joined the Common Market 1972.

TRADE William Patterson, founder and founder of the Bank of England, London, 1709; Charles Keast, ironmaster, London, 1808; Sir Joseph Whitworth, industrialist and engineer, Monic Carlo, 1857; Carlo Pellegrini, the cartoonist, 1898; Sir Isaac Pitman, inventor of shorthand system, Bath, 1857; Walter Sickert, painter, Bath, 1942; Lyndon B. Johnson, 36th American President 1963-69, San Antonio, Texas, 1973; The Accession of Edward VII, 1901; The UK, Irish Republic and Denmark joined the Common Market 1972.

English-Speaking Union

Lady Boyd was the speaker at an English-Speaking Union literary evening held last night at Dartmouth House, Barreys' Hall, London.

TICKETS FOR SALE

ALL ANNUAL £10.00, **ADMISSION** £5.00, **TELEGRAM** £1.00, **POSTAGE** 50p, **TELEPHONE** 0171 250 0751.

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THE TIMES TODAY

FRIDAY JANUARY 22 1999

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South African role for Mandelson

■ Peter Mandelson was on course to make a dramatic return to his role as election strategist by travelling to South Africa and working for a smooth transition to Nelson Mandela's successor. The job would see the former Trade Secretary acting as special adviser to the African National Congress helping ensure the party's return to power and the election of Thabo Mbeki as president. **Page 1**

Doctors rebel over Viagra

■ Doctors were urged to prescribe Viagra freely over the next six weeks before the Government can impose rationing of the anti-impotence drug. In defiance of Frank Dobson's intention to curtail prescriptions from March, the British Medical Association said impotent men going to their GP should be able receive the anti-impotence pill on the NHS. **Page 1**

Hunt for children

Fifty Gurkhas joined the search in Hastings for the missing ten-year-olds Lisa Hoodless and Charlene Lunnon. **Page 1, 5**

Crash misses school

A village primary school in Nottinghamshire came within a split second of disaster after an RAF Tornado jet collided in mid-air with a light aircraft. **Page 1**

IRA meeting anger

Victims of IRA atrocities expressed outrage at a Minister's decision to meet relatives of an IRA unit killed while attacking a County Armagh police station. **Page 2**

Casualty list

More than four million people have sought details of their relatives and loved ones in the two months since the names of those killed in two world wars were posted on the internet. **Page 3**

Amnesty's plea

Extradition to Spain is the only way to bring General Pinochet to justice because Chile is unlikely to put him on trial, Amnesty International told the law lords. **Page 9**

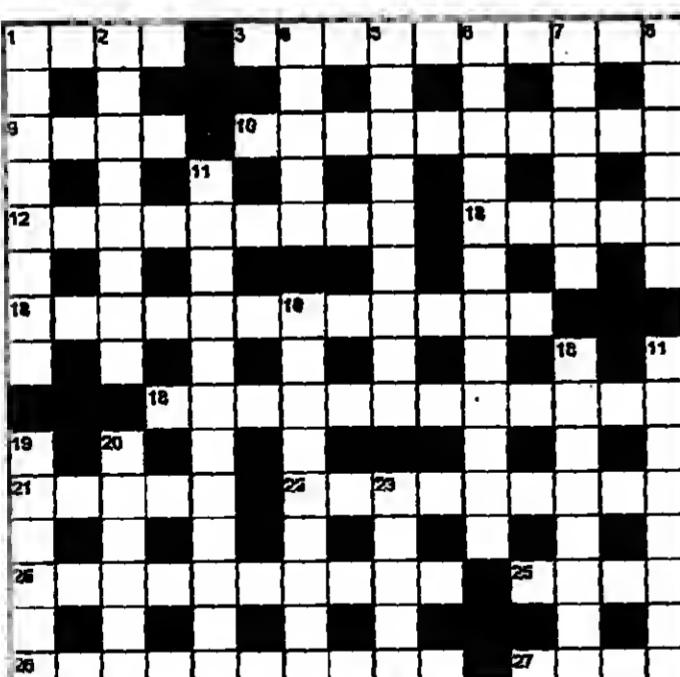
Liberal starter

The campaign for the leadership of the Liberal Democrats began in acrimony yesterday when Nick Harvey, one of the leading contenders, was accused of jumping the starting-gun. **Page 10**

Waiting for Monet

■ Tempers were frayed and voices raised in the elegant surroundings of Burlington House as hundreds of Friends of the Royal Academy were forced to queue for a preview of the record-breaking Monet exhibition. The queue was four or five deep in places and snaked for hundreds of yards from the gallery. Many art-lovers had a wait of about two hours. **Page 6**

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 21,007



- ACROSS
1 Ariadne's oddly selected helper (4).
3 One female unknown, introduced to acting, drying up (10).
9 By the sound of it, excessively short sight (4).
10 Liberal hoped an end might be made of it (4-6).
12 Mistreat chap with a title (9).
13 Signal death of king and royal mistress (5).
14 Love action, showing no fear (7,5).
18 Let the blow be viewed as out of order here (5,3,4).
21 American cutter goes to island, it's assumed (5).
22 Material for making path, of standard weight (9).

Solution to Puzzle No 21,006

GIULIO'S AGATHION
NAUHEAR
SCOREBOARD BEEF
OB EWS OJN
DRAUGHTHORSE
RE YEA E E
DERV DORMOUSE
LI IDATY A
BULLYOFF EMMA
CG GFS R B
STONYHEARTED
A CICIRRS
GNAT UNREADABLES
CARS ETWN
SEVPRP SPANNERS

- 24 Murderous female taking champagne on jet (5,5).
25 Call round (4).
26 Leaders of brave enemy shot in advance (10).
27 Blight has finally killed tree (4).
DOWN
1 Athenian clad in some brittle metal (8).
2 Set off from school in time (8).
4 Given a raise - initially unacceptable poor pay eventually doubled (5).
5 Vegetarian food for omnivore (9).
6 Christmas present - open with anger (12).
7 Absolutely denied being wrong (6).
8 It's a nuisance having to go around and take a plane (6).
11 One with craft to be PM? (12).
15 Virtuous girl's sincerity (4,5).
16 What's for pudding? Is it a lemon possibly the answer? (9).
17 Strewth! It's no good for women's power (8).
19 Various blood groups found among natives in African forest (6).
20 Fare from Middle East pupil affluently could afford (6).
23 A fellow without right dress (5).

Times Two Crossword, page 48



Senator Michael Sullivan, the former Governor of Wyoming, inspects a guard of honour after becoming the US Ambassador to Ireland.

GRE bid: Royal & Sun Alliance

The giant insurance group, is poised to bid around £3.5 billion for its rival Guardian Royal Alliance. **Page 25**

Chief goes: Laura Ashley

The troubled retail company, lost its sixth chief executive since 1990 but gained the Rev Pat Robertson, the television evangelist, and former US presidential hopeful, as a non-executive director. **Page 25**

Mexican wave

When the Pope arrives in Mexico

to a rapturous welcome the enthusiasm will conceal the strained violent relationship between the Mexican authorities and the church. **Page 15**

Nelson under fire

Lord Nelson was criticised by Italian historians, who branded him a war criminal who had used "brutal, bloodthirsty methods" to put down a revolt. **Page 16**

Clinton passion

President Clinton called on an old Arkansas friend to mount the last, impassioned speech for his defence, as the White House team cranked up emotion and rhetoric for a final attack. **Page 17**

Markets: FTSE 100

index fell 83.30 points to 6022.3. The

pound rose 0.41 cents to \$1.618 and 0.09 against the euro to 70.12p. The sterling index rose to 99.6 from 99.5. **Page 28**

Snooker: Robin Hull

the first player to miss the final black in a professional event with a maximum break available. **Page 46**

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THE TIMES

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Costly drug shares
offer no cure for
faltering market

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ARTS

Crazy name, crazy
guys: pop's
Barenaked Ladies

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MEDIA

More suffering
as Amanda
takes a walk

PAGES 36-39

TELEVISION
AND
RADIO
Pages
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BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

FRIDAY JANUARY 22 1999

Board concedes defeat after buyer raises hostile offer and bags 38% stake

Sears backs Green's £548m bid

BY SARAH CUNNINGHAM
RETAIL CORRESPONDENT

SIR BOB REID, chairman of Sears, yesterday accepted an improved offer for the retail group worth £548 million — an increase of 354p — from Philip Green and the Barclay twins, David and Frederick.

After a day of talks between the two sides, the Sears board agreed to accept 39p a share from January 1999. Investments JIL, it was set up for the bid by Mr Green and the Barclays,

and had a 340p a share bid rejected last week. Some late buying in the market ensured that by the end of the day, JIL owned 38 per cent of Sears. It already had 23 per cent of Sears in the bag after acceptance by Phillips & Drew last week. The deal is closed at 354p.

Sir Bob said: "The increased cash offer of 39p per share represents a fair deal for shareholders and is in line with the board's strategy to return value to them."

Adam Barclay, who is the chairman of David and chairman of

JIL, said: "We are delighted that our increased offer has been recommended unanimously by the board of Sears. We consider that this decision provides both clarity to employees and certainty of a full value to Sears shareholders."

The deal is likely to mean that Sears directors will receive large payouts from their options, which in most cases, are triggered by a takeover. David Daffy, finance director, could be in line for as much as £1.5 million, while Roger Groome, the property director,

could collect up to £1.18 million. Derek Lovelock, head of the clothing business, could get £697,000 from his options.

Sears, which JIL will de-list from the stock market, owns the Freemans catalogue company, the Warehouse, Wallis, and Richards women's wear chains, the Adams children's wear chain, a property business and the Creation credit card business. Sears last week announced the sale of Creation to Banque Nationale de Paris and Cognioga for £141 million.

JIL is believed to be considering continuing with the sale of Creation, and is understood to have held talks about the sale of Freemans with Otto Versand of Germany. N Brown, chaired by Sir David Alliance, is also extremely keen to get its hands on Freemans, which it made one attempt to buy from Sears.

Mr Green, who is chief executive of JIL, said yesterday that he had not pre-sold any part of the company: "I want to go and meet the management of each part of the company," he said before making any decisions on what would be best for

them. He said that the price had been raised "to save all the uncertainty. We felt it was best to get an agreed deal."

JIL is being partly funded by Mr Green's wife Cristina, and by the Barclays, who own the Ritz hotel as well as *The Scotsman, Scotland on Sunday* and *Sunday Business* newspapers. The bulk of the financing comes from loans raised through BankBoston and the Bank of Scotland.

Mr Green's other business is Owen Owen, the department store company based in the North West, and the Mark One chain of discount fashion stores.

The terms represent a significant premium to the low of 146.5p at which Sears shares traded in October. However, the shares traded at 32p as recently as June 1998. In 1995 the buoyancy of the retail sector and optimism about the outlook for retailers lifted the shares to 76p.

Rise and fall, page 26
Commentary, page 27

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDEXES

FTSE 100	6022.3	(-83.3)
Yield: All Share	2728.03	(-31.54)
Market:	14265.42	(+17.37)

US RATE

Federal Funds	4.75%	(4.75%)
Long bond	101.48*	(101.48)
Yield	6.17%	(6.17%)

LONDON MONEY

3-mth interbank	5.75%	(5.75%)
Libor long gilt future (Mar)	120.08	(119.53)

STERLING

New York	1.6515*	(1.6458)
London	1.6519	(1.6474)
S. Africa	1.4282	(1.4228)
Canada	1.2052	(1.2052)
Yen	106.98	(106.98)
E. Index	99.5	(99.5)

USD/DOLLAR

London	1.1576*	(1.1572)
SF	1.1565*	(1.1575)
Yen	112.75*	(112.89)
S. Index	104.0	(104.3)
Tokyo close Yen	113.07	

WORLD SEA OIL

Brent 15-day (Apr)	\$10.90	(\$10.85)
Gold		

London close	\$280.15	(\$286.15)
Exchange rates		Page 28

* denotes midday trading price

Zeneca shares soar to record

Zeneca shares reached a new high as the company took a big step towards completing its proposed merger with Astra of Sweden. AstraZeneca, as the enlarged pharmaceuticals group will be known, will be Britain's fifth-largest company. Page 26

Bear bid lifted

Marston Thompson & Everard rejected an increased £290 million offer from Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries, setting the scene for what is expected to be a tight finale to this increasingly bitter battle. Page 27: *Tempus*, page 28

RSA ready with £3.5bn offer for rival GRE

By JASON NISST

ROYAL & SUNALLIANCE, the giant insurance group, is poised to bid for £3.5 billion.

The offer, priced at about 390p per GRE share, has topped rival bids from other interested parties such as AXA, the French group, Allianz of Germany and AIG, the US insurance giant. The nearest offer was understood to have been no higher than 370p, a share. GRE shares were unmove at 354p yesterday.

GRE — asked by Morgan Stanley, the US investment bank, to carry out an auction of the company after receiving formal approaches from various rivals last year.

The group decided the GRE could not continue in its current form — being smaller and more diversified than most rivals. It said it would announce the result of the auction by the end of this month.

RSA — which was itself created by a merger between Royal Insurance and Sun Alliance in 1996 — is to be given exclusive negotiating rights to conclude a deal, though it is not yet in a position to put an offer to shareholders.

Any deal would need to be financed by a rights issue by RSA of up to £2 billion. This might not be well received by the market, given that RSA shares have fallen from a high

of 380p last March to stand at 487p, down 113p, yesterday.

The bid could also face a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and there would be concerns about job losses, which could be as high as 5,000 as RSA integrates GRE's general insurance business.

The market is also concerned about the problems RSA had in merging the Royal and Sun Alliance operations. After the merger, the group had two chief executives, Roger Taylor and Roger Gamble. This structure did not work and both left, with Bob Mendelson being promoted from the US business to become sole chief executive of RSA.

The GRE board, led by new chairman, Sir Colin Chandler, may yet decide that none of the bids put forward give full value to the company. The alternative to selling the company in one go is for GRE to sell its businesses piecemeal.

A circular from HSBC Securities, the broker, published yesterday, suggests that GRE could be worth as much as 473p a share.

AXA has said it is interested in the general insurance business and Prudential is understood to be keen to buy other parts of GRE, including the burgeoning healthcare operation.

Neither GRE nor RSA would comment on what they called "market speculation" last night.

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The bid could

Rise and fall of the Sears that Clore built

IT IS EASY to forget just how large Sears once was. Only a decade ago it was still Britain's leading retailer. Its 4,000 stores dominated many high streets and gave it even more outlets than the Post Office.

By comparison, the Sears that Philip Green and the Barclay brothers are buying is a sadly shrunken thing of just a few clothing chains and the Freemans catalogue business.

In its heyday, the British Shoe Corporation, a now defunct Sears subsidiary, sold as many as one in four pairs of shoes in the UK. It traded as Freeman Hardy Willis, Trueform, Lilley & Skinner, Manfield, Roland Carter, Dolcis, Bertie, Curteess and Shoe City.

Sears' menswear chains included Fosters, Hornes, and Your Price. Its women's clothes chains included Miss Selfridge, Wallis and Warehouse, all of which remain in the group. The company also owned Olympus Sport, and the jewellers Garrard and Mappin & Webb. Other names it once owned include Lewis's



Clore ran Sears in its heyday



Strong: damaged by Facia deal



Reid: chairman during decline

department stores, sold in 1988, and William Hill, the bookmaker, sold for £31 million in December of that year.

The decline of Sears arguably began many years before the current management joined the group. The true glory days were with Sir Charles Clore, the property magnate who

bought the J Sears True Form Boot company in 1954 and ran it, aided by his trusted lieutenant, Leonard Sainer, until his death 20 years later.

Sir Charles's legacy lived on in the company until four years ago through Geoffrey Maitland Smith. He was chairman for nine years until handing over to Sir Bob Reid in 1995,

and had been a board member for 25 years, since Sir Charles's time.

With the group seen to be floundering, Michael Pickard began to make some changes when he was brought in as chief executive in the late Eighties. It was he who sold Mappin & Webb and William Hill, and he also introduced Olympus Sport and Ad-

ams, the childrenswear chain, which is still part of the group.

When he was succeeded by Liam Strong in 1992, the appointment was well received, and the shares rose. The honeymoon did not last long. The most damaging incident for Mr Strong, who finally left the group two years ago, came when Facia, the retail business built by Stephen Hincliffe, collapsed and the leases on 380 shoe shops that Mr Strong had sold to Facia reverted to Sears. Other sales of businesses — notably to Philip Green — were viewed as badly timed.

Sir Bob's chairmanship of Sears saw it go into a sorry decline. An attempt to sell Freemans failed and a proposed merger last year was pulled because it too would have failed. Selfridges, which was merged, has underperformed the market. Trading by what is left of the group has limped along. For once, calling shareholders — now able to exit Sears at 35p a share — "long-suffering" is not an overstatement.

SARAH CUNNINGHAM

Zeneca's shares soar on merger progress

By PAUL DURMAN

SHARES of Zeneca reached a new high of £29.33 during trading yesterday, as the former drugs arm of ICI took a big step towards completing its proposed merger with Astra of Sweden.

AstraZeneca — as the enlarged pharmaceuticals group will be known — is set to become Britain's fifth-largest company. Merger documents were issued to shareholders yesterday. The shares ended the day up 28p at £28.62, compared with a price of £18.60 in October.

Zeneca, said that the deal with Astra would create "a winning combination" and the third-largest pharmaceutical company in the world. The proposed company, which will report its results in dollars, has a stock market value of about £48 billion.

Sir David Barnes, Zeneca's chief executive, dismissed the chances of the deal being blown off course by a hostile offer for either partner. He said: "If someone is going to intervene, I would be the last to know. But do I regard it as a real possibility? No, I don't."

Yesterday's closing share price values Zeneca's stake at almost £6 million.

even before his share options are included.

Zeneca also said its trading performance for 1998 was in line with market expectations. US pharmaceutical sales were 21 per cent ahead, with Zestril becoming the most prescribed hypertension drug in its class. Sales of cancer drugs were also strong.

The agrochemicals division finished the year strongly. The specialty chemicals business, which is up for sale, recorded lower sales than in 1997.

Detailed third-quarter results, published for the first time, showed that the strength of sterling reduced Zeneca's underlying pre-tax profits by 4 per cent to £845 million after nine months of 1998. At constant currencies, profits would have been up 9 per cent.

Sir David, who is to be deputy chairman of AstraZeneca, said the full-year cost of the strong pound is likely to be about £130 million. He said that profits would have been about £300 million higher but for the rise in the pound over the past two years. Tom McKillop is to be the company's chief executive.

Zeneca's shareholders will be asked to approve the deal with Astra on February 18.

AstraZeneca



Tom McKillop, chief executive designate of AstraZeneca, reported a 21 per cent rise in Zeneca's pharmaceutical sales in the US

Novartis prepared for a major deal

NOVARTIS, the Swiss health-care group, yesterday expressed its willingness to make a big strategic deal as it reported 1998 sales that disappointed analysts' expectations (Paul Durman writes).

Raymond Breit, chief financial officer, said: "You will always have a stream of smaller transactions. Once in a while you have larger transactions. That is part of growing your business and defending your leading positions."

Novartis, formed from the merger three years ago of

Ciba and Sandoz, has been suggested as a rival partner for Zeneca, which is planning a £48 billion merger with Astra of Sweden.

Novartis' sales grew by only 2 per cent to \$16.7 billion (£13.9 billion) although this represented a 5 per cent improvement in Swiss francs. Sales fell by 3 per cent in the final quarter.

Analysts had forecast an annual sales increase of up to 5 per cent.

The group's shares fell 6 per cent in early trade.

Monsanto suffers charges of \$800m

MONSANTO, the controversial US agribusiness that is a leading producer of genetically engineered plants, has disclosed the price of its phenomenal year of expansion, reporting charges of more than \$800 million (£485 million) for restructuring and write-offs (Carl Morishita writes).

The company said that charges of \$625 million in the fourth quarter would cover the cost of 1,700 job losses and the disposal of assets. These are expected to save \$160 million a year for the company.

Monsanto is also taking a \$235 million hit for research and development write-offs relating to last year's multi-billion dollar acquisition spree, which included the takeover of Cargill's international seed business. The write-offs left Monsanto with a post-tax loss of \$603 million, compared with last year's \$5 million profit.

Monsanto scored a political victory in Britain yesterday when a House of Lords committee endorsed the use of genetically modified crops.

Lookers hit by falling car prices

LOOKERS, the motor retail group based in Manchester, blamed a slide in used car prices for reduced full-year profits, adding that it expects car prices to continue slipping this year. However, Craig McKinney, chairman, said that January orders are at a similar level to last year and he expects a boost from the introduction of twice-yearly registrations which begin in March. "This year is likely to be similar to 1998. There will be continuing pressure on prices of new products and that will come through to the used car market," he said.

In the year to September 30, the group reported pre-tax profits down 4 per cent at £8.6 million (£9.0 million) on turnover on continuing operations of £58.4 million. The figures were hit in part by a 40 per cent drop in business at its agricultural machinery division, which saw losses of £25.000. New car sales increased by 7.5 per cent due mainly to a large increase in sales in the less profitable fleet sector. Used car sales increased 10 per cent on the previous year. The final dividend is unchanged at 5.63p, maintaining the total at 8.25p. Earnings were unchanged at 15.6p a share.

SARAH CUNNINGHAM

Halifax joint venture

HALIFAX has announced a 50/50 joint venture with Cetelem, a Paris-based specialist in the European consumer credit market. The new company, to be called Halifax Cetelem Finance, will begin trading in the third quarter of 1999 and will offer credit for the purchase of durable goods at the point of sale. It is the latest in a string of Halifax joint ventures aimed at exploiting the bank's strong brand. Cetelem is a wholly owned subsidiary of Paribas. It specialises in consumer finance managing accounts in France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and the Benelux countries. In 1997 its total funds under management were about £8.2 billion.

Tadpole sinks lower

TADPOLE TECHNOLOGY, the specialist computer manufacturer, yesterday disappointed the City by reporting a rise in pre-tax losses from £3.5 million to £3.7 million for the year ended September 30. Sales fell 30 per cent to £9.4 million, while losses per share fell from 10.3p to 6.6p. The company's shares, which traded at 30.7p in 1995, fell 0.75p to 11.5p yesterday. Tadpole said it was now focused on two kinds of computers: those which used the Unix computer language, and those which used the Java language. The company concluded that 1998 had been "a significant year in realising strategic goals".

ITG wins licence

SHARES in Internet Technology Group (ITG), the Internet service provider, rose by 22 per cent, to 17.25p, after the company was awarded a telecoms licence by the Department of Trade and Industry. The licence will allow ITG to operate its own international telecoms network, and will therefore improve the company's margins on corporate Internet services. The company already has a high-capacity transatlantic link between London and New York, operated under a temporary licence.

Enterprise cheer

SHARES in Enterprise Inns, the tenant pub operator, rose 16.4p to 37.9p after an upbeat trading statement. At its annual meeting, Hubert Reid, chairman, told shareholders that Christmas and new year trading had hit budget and the integration of Mayfair Taverns, acquired in October, had been completed "ahead of our expected timetable". He added: "Operating profit for the first quarter was ahead of expectations and earnings are anticipated to benefit further from the increasingly benign interest rate movement."

Takeover at Division

DIVISION GROUP, the loss-making supplier of computer-aided design and manufacturing technology, has succumbed to a £28 million takeover by America's Parametric Technology, a software company which is listed on Nasdaq. The offer is worth 40p a share, compared with Wednesday's close of 35.4p and a 12-month high of 63.4p. Yesterday Division reported increased pre-tax losses of £3.8 million for the year to the end of October, compared with a £1.78 million loss in the previous year. There is again no dividend.

Daejan holds dividend

DAEJAN HOLDINGS, the property group, is maintaining the interim dividend at 19p after reporting pre-tax profits little changed at £12.6 million for the six months to the end of September against £12.9 million previously. Earnings were 54.2p a share, down from 55.6p. The company said the results reflect a change of policy in offering residential units for letting rather than for sale. Daejan shares, which hit a 12-month high of £17.10 in July, were unchanged at 10.90 yesterday.

Wiggins flies in US

WIGGINS GROUP, the property company that owns Kent International Airport, has agreed to acquire a 50-year lease on Smyrna Airport in Nashville, Tennessee, for an undisclosed sum. The airport handles 80,000 take-offs and landings each year, mainly corporate jets, jet maintenance and freight shipments. Wiggins also reported interim pre-tax profits of £634,000, down from £1.12 million previously when results benefited from property disposals. Earnings were 0.08p a share (0.16p). The dividend is again passed.

BT switches to Ericsson

BT has placed an order worth up to £270 million with Ericsson for high-performance switches to expand its network capacity to meet the anticipated growth in Internet, high-speed data and video services. The switches will be deployed over the next four years, with the first ones scheduled to go live in June. The investment is in addition to the £800 million expenditure BT announced last May to extend significantly its core optical fibre transmission network. BT spends about £2 billion a year on network improvements and overall expansion.

Nissan to go ahead with £215m Sunderland plan

BY ADAM JONES

NISSAN, the debt-ridden Japanese car manufacturer, warned yesterday that 1998 profits from its UK manufacturing operation will be less than half the £77 million in 1997 because of the strength of sterling.

UK car exports top 1m

UK CAR output rose last year with exports exceeding a million for the first time. However, there was a big decline last month amid temporary factory closures and short-time working (Christine Buckley writes).

A total of 1.74 million cars were made in 1998, a rise of 3 per cent on 1997. Those built for export rose 6.1 per cent.

to 1.02 million, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Production of commercial vehicles fell 4.4 per cent to 227,379. The home market fell 7.3 per cent to 124,538.

December car production fell 1.6 per cent to 114,260, with the number of cars built for the home market down 31.4 per cent to 90,996.

Mirror rejects £900m RIM bid

BY RAYMOND SNODDY, MEDIA EDITOR

THE board of The Mirror Group yesterday rejected as inadequate the £900 million bid from Regional Independent Media, publisher of the Yorkshire Post, but left the door open for further negotiations.

RIM has also agreed to assume £500 million debts, lifting the total value of its offer to £1.4 billion. RIM, which is run by Chris Oskley, former chief executive of Midland Independent Newspapers, now part of the Mirror, will be given further information on which to base a formal offer.

Yesterday the Mirror board received two new independent valuations of the group. Both, it is believed, place a higher value on the Mirror Group than the RIM offer, but the difference is not thought to be great enough to derail a possible deal.

RIM is backed by Cando-

ver, the venture capital group, and by the Soros Fund, the investment vehicle of George Soros, and Deutsche Morgan Grenfell.

Mirror Group owns three national newspapers as well as the *Daily Record* in Scotland, *The Newsletter* in Belfast and *Midland Independent Newspapers*.

Trinity, the largest regional newspaper group, which broke off talks with Mirror earlier this month, was planning a all-share offer.

A share deal is preferred by Phillips & Drew, the largest Mirror shareholder with more than 22 per cent. A number of other shareholders would probably be happy with RIM's cash if agreement can be reached on the valuation of the company.

Mirror shares fell 3p to 19.85p yesterday.

Divine guidance for Laura Ashley?

FROM OLIVER ALGUST
IN NEW YORK

THE REV PAT ROBERTSON, the new Laura Ashley director appointed yesterday, is sure to add a splash of colour to the retailer's rather gloomy balance sheet. But shareholders and shoppers may well ask what he can do to improve finances — short of summoning divine help.

The company described Mr Robertson as "a noted media pioneer, educator, philanthropist, and religious broadcaster". This only hints at the unique role he plays in American culture and politics.

After his unsuccessful bid to be elected as the Republican Party's presidential candidate in 1988, he carved out a niche as a political commentator extraordinaire. From his weekly television pulpit on the *700 Club* programme, he preaches Christian

fundamentalism and chastises President Clinton. For two decades, Mr Robertson has been one of the strongest voices of ultra conservatism in America, a position he has expanded and fortified as chairman of the Christian Coalition, as much a business as a political lobby group.

Mr Robertson has wide-ranging business interests, controlled and sometimes headed by family members. The Robertsons own a refinery in California and companies in Africa and China, in addition to two million shares of a certain small English clothes retailer.

Until last year, Mr Robertson also controlled International Family Entertainment, a cable television company he founded. The business was sold to The News Corporation, parent company of *The Times*, for \$1.7 billion (£1 billion). His personal wealth has allowed Mr

Robertson to remain a fixture in US politics far beyond the normal shelf-life of an unelected campaigner.

His particular talent is to seize a popular issue and become identified with the cause. He was one of the most fervent anti-abortion activists. This week he adopted the millennium bug for his purposes.

But his biggest fight recently has been over the sins of the President. Mr Robertson was one of the first mainstream commentators calling for impeachment to combat "moral degeneracy".

Last year the Christian Broadcasting Network agreed to make a "substantial payment" to the Internal Revenue Service. The taxman had conducted an investigation into improper political activities during Mr Robertson's presidential bid.

All valuable business experience, no doubt.



Robertson: splash of colour

So Sears has gone. Can Liam Ashley be far behind? These two companies have far more in common than the desperate "Sale" signs currently splashed across their shop windows. Both are stories of inept management and ineffective shareholders. The current retail downturn may have added to their problems but in both cases it is the company and not the consumer that is culpable for shredding shareholder value.

Between them, they have provided lavish rewards to some of the most incompetent chief executives ever to have been given desk space. Just imagine how much faster either company might have been brought to its knees had it been able to employ both Liam Strong and Anne Ivenson simultaneously. What a wonderful double act that would have been. Mr Strong deploying rafts of expensive consultants to devise dull and expensive strategies and Ms Ivenson rolling them out into huge new unwanted stores, pausing only to don her leathers and pose for *Vogue*.

The boards of both companies were bamboozled by their fast-talking chief executives, although Laura Ashley was at least quicker to spot the flaws in Ms Ivenson's tactics than Sears was in rumbbling Liam Strong.

Sir Bob Reid supported Strong when his failings as a leader and manager were painfully clear to the outside world. But Sir Bob

tends to take a blinkered view of life. His non-executives appear to be completely blindfold, for they sat and watched as the business that Sir Charles Clore had built up was gradually shrunk to its current pitiful state. Lord Tebbit

may have been a feisty politician but he sat on the Sears board for 12 years without, apparently, raising a voice of dissent.

Despite Sir Bob Reid's recent insistence that Sears shares were worth between £5 and £6, yesterday he recommended an offer of 25p as "a fair deal for shareholders". It certainly represents the fairest treatment they have had for some time. Given Philip Green's reputation as one of the sharpest operators, it is worth noting that, not so long ago, the shares languished below 15p. If he is now prepared to pay so much more, he clearly has every confidence that he can extract the sort of valuation that Sir Bob talked about.

Watching Mr Green and his backers make his profits will inevitably be galling for Sears shareholders but those who had held the stock for years have only themselves to blame. Even after the fiasco of the Paca deal, they allowed Sir Bob to remain at the helm of the incredibly shrinking Sears ship.

If Sir Bernard Ashley had been removed from the scene sooner, Laura Ashley might not have been such a miserable tale. But he at least had the excuse of a huge shareholding to justify his interfering. His views on what has happened since are probably unprintable. Ditch the Malaysian investors who were persuaded to bail it out last time.

Heavy weather for insurance bidders

Guardian Royal Exchange's future should have been settled by now, eight weeks after the smallest of the independent composite insurers acknowledged that it was in play. But the haggling still goes on.

Three years ago, when Royal and Sun Alliance were pondering their merger, much of the in-

dustry was enjoying a healthy recovery in profit. Even a year ago, when Commercial Union and General Accident popped the question to each other, things were not too bad.

Margins on general insurance have now relapsed, along with most of the share prices, making it much harder to offer investors an attractive package. While other sectors boom, insurers never bounced back from the late summer post-Russia mini-crash.

Even GRE, buoyed largely by bid hopes, trades a quarter below its 1998 high of 47p a share. Sun Life and Provincial, backed by its ambitious French parent AXA, has seen its share price keep up but the early favour seems disinclined to play a premium price for GRE and has been ruled out, along with other on-the-bidders. That has left the field for Royal & SunAlliance, which ought to be prepared to pay more.

With a market value only half

that of Allied Zurich, for example, RSA desperately needs to bulk itself up to have any chance of surviving as one of the big global insurance players. And there is a lot of overlap to maximise cost cutting. But RSA cannot afford a hostile bid for GRE.

After the high hopes of 1996, RSA rapidly lost friends by failing to sort out in advance the management of the merged group, resulting in the chiefs of both previous companies being stripped of power a year ago. Bob Mendelson, who was brought over from the US operation to speed up the £175 million a year of planned costs cuts, has yet to see the fruits of his labours.

At this tricky point, a strikingly timed circular from HSBC has bolstered lingering resistance in the GRE camp. HSBC urges institutional shareholders not to allow themselves to be shortchanged by a cheap bid or takeover. It is aiming for 43p a share, valuing GRE at £3.8 billion, rather

than the £3 billion some rejected suitors had in mind.

At that price, a bidder would have to add value to GRE's jewels, such as the PPP sickness insurer, rather than just wield the axe. Anyone who tries will have to do a lot of convincing lobbying in hostile City parlours.

The insurance market's saviour

Ron Sandler deserves a decent send-off when he departs from Lloyd's this summer. He may only have served four years but they were crucial years for the survival of the insurance market. Mr Sandler and Sir David Rowland rarely acknowledged just how close to extinction Lloyd's was, but they laboured mightily to achieve the settlements with the names and the new investment that would enable the market to survive.

South African Sandler might not have attracted the same headlines as his predecessor, the eccentric Peter Middleton, but he did get the job done. Mr Middleton, famous as the motor-bike riding former monk, made a hasty escape to Salomon Brothers and posed for *Vogue*.

It will be intriguing to see whether he will want to venture some of his money on becoming a Lloyd's name. Sandler had little sympathy for those names who enjoyed the profits while they flowed but refused to pay up when fortune turned nasty. Lloyd's is now chasing them and, like Sandler, means business.

On-Line honesty

THE directors of On-Line clearly enjoy a joke. The chuckling was almost audible yesterday as they owned up to the fact that they are not really a whizzy Internet-oriented business after all. Having sold some of their hugely overvalued shares, they could afford a spot of honesty. But the spirit of openness is unlikely to be contagious. Investors need to tread warily as they try and pick Internet winners. Arcadia's £1 million of Internet sales amount to a promising start but not a whole new personality.

Mobil's spending cut by \$600m

BY DOMINIC WALSH

Weak oil prices have forced Mobil to cut current-year spending plans by \$600 million (£364 million), and the company has given warning that oil production will fall in 1999.

The US oil company, which has agreed an \$80 billion merger with the rival Exxon, has pruned its project portfolio and given warning that its 1999 budget may be cut further if oil prices fail to improve.

Mobil said its 1999 capital budget would be \$4.8 billion down 11 per cent from last year. Drilling will continue in the new West of Shetlands area.

Mobil's warning coincided with better than expected earnings from Exxon. It suffered a 40 per cent fall in fourth-quarter net profits to \$1.5 billion, but earnings on a comparable basis were only 30 per cent down, less than the 50 per cent fall analysts forecast.

VAT ruling
Car leasing and trading companies had a setback in the European Court yesterday when the Advocate General backed UK Customs and Excise's right to limit recovery of VAT on cars. Up to £15 billion would be at stake including backdated claims by the companies. The court's final judgment, which usually follows the Advocate General's opinion, will be made later this year.

Cisco invests
Cisco Systems, the US technology giant, is making a £10 million investment in Scotland by unveiling a European research and development centre in Edinburgh, and starting its first European manufacturing in Livingston. The investment could create up to 160 jobs. The research centre is developing software technology for world markets.

Krug for LVMH
LVMH, the French luxury goods group, has bought the Krug champagne business from the Rémy Cointreau drinks company for £1 billion (£107 million). LVMH products include Dom Pérignon champagne and Louis Vuitton leather goods.

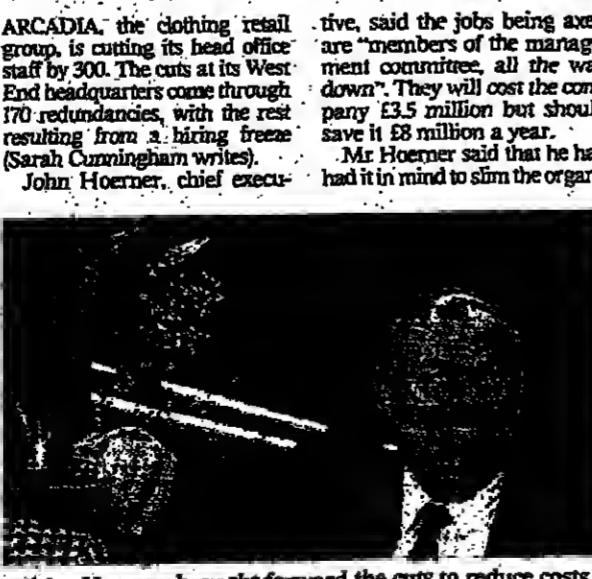
Bank's £19m buy
Brown Shipley, the merchant bank, is to buy Henry Cooke, the Offex-traded investment manager, for £19.6 million. More than half of Cooke's shareholders have already accepted the deal.

Bitter end near as Marston's rejects new Wolves' offer



David Thompson, left, managing director of Wolverhampton & Dudley, with financial director Ralph Findlay

Arcadia rebounds on news of 300 job cuts



John Hoerner brought forward the cuts to reduce costs

like in the four weeks before Christmas. Last year ELC posted a £6.7 million loss.

However, Menzies, which sold its newsagents to WH Smith last year, still plans to sell ELC in the near future to focus on its core business, distribution, and to continue the move into airport support services.

Menzies pre-tax profits for the six months to October 31 rose to £12.2 million (£200,000) on a turnover of continuing operations at £602.7 million (£524.4 million). Earnings per share were 2.3p (loss of 1.2p) and the interim dividend remains at 4.2p a share.

The results were hit by a poor perfor-

mance at THE Home Entertainment, the music, video and book distributor. The group has set aside an exceptional charge of £15 million in the second half to reorganise the subsidiary.

David Mackay, John Menzies chief executive, called the situation at THE "unacceptable". He said: "We got it badly wrong in the last year and the buck stops with me." He said group second-half profits were likely to be "much closer to last year's performance than they were in the first half".

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L&G among the top ten fund managers

BY RICHARD MILES AND CAROLINE MERRELL

LEGAL & GENERAL has galloped into the top ten institutional fund managers by attracting more than £1 billion of new business to its index tracking funds in 1998.

Its shares plunged in December after a profits warning and as analysts became worried that the group's high fixed costs made it particularly vulnerable to a downturn in sales.

The group, which is behind the Dorothy Perkins, Top Shop, Top Man, Evans, Principles, Racing Green and Hawkhead brands, said yesterday that sales per square foot were down 1.9 per cent in the 20 weeks to January 16. Total sales, including new space, were up 0.3 per cent. Home shopping and Internet sales have fared better.

Worldwide sales of life and pension policies rose 21 per cent to £494 million. UK sales increased 16 per cent to £341 million.

Single-premium business showed the most improvement, up 23 per cent in UK life and pensions to £1.4 billion, continuing a decade-long trend away from regular premium payments. Single-premium payments jumped 31 per cent to £755 million.

But David Prosser, group chief executive, sounded a note of caution: "We wouldn't be immune from any fall in consumer confidence. But the fourth quarter held up pretty well. We have not seen any significant fall away in business."

New business at Zurich Financial Services rose 18 per cent last year, boosted by sales through independent financial advisers.

ZFS, comprising Allied Dunbar, Worldwide sales of life and pension policies rose 21 per cent to £494 million. UK sales increased 16 per cent to £341 million.

Single-premium business showed the most improvement, up 23 per cent in UK life and pensions to £1.4 billion,

Eagle Star, Zurich and Threadneedle, the fund manager, is hoping this year to continue to increase its sales through IFAs.

Brian Thomas, Zurich Financial Services finance director, said: "We are on record as saying that we are looking for an acquisition in this sector."

New premiums at the Allied Dunbar salesforce grew by 5 per cent to £240 million, while net new business through the IFA channel grew by 42 per cent to £155 million.

Threadneedle, which provides the fund management for the group's products and offers its services to third parties, attracted £439 million of UK single-premium investment funds.

Tempus, page 28

Bear necessity for ELC recovery

BY MANUS COSTELLO

BARNEY the talking teddy bear came to the rescue of the Early Learning Centre over Christmas, it emerged yesterday.

John Menzies, the distribution company that owns ELC, said sales of the interactive bear, which can learn and repeat phrases, surpassed expectations, leaving ELC close to breaking even for the full year after successive years of losses.

ELC sold 12,000 bears over Christmas at £100 each, contributing £1.7 million to sales which were up 15 per cent like-for-

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STOCK MARKET



FRASER NELSON

FTSE falls as Net craze shows sign of demise

THE Internet gold rush showed its first sign of collapse yesterday on fears that the Wall Street craze for Net stocks is set to suffer an early death.

Dealers who had profited from selling to "99-ers" — private investors who appeared after the new year in search of Internet companies, said that sellers were emerging for the first time.

This combined with fresh fears about a Latin American economic crisis to send the FTSE 100 index down 83.3 points to 6,022.3 — with strategists expecting another dip below the 6,000 level today.

Jitters were traced back to Barton Biggs, the influential chairman of Morgan Stanley Dean Witter Investments. He told a Tokyo conference that Argentina could be next for a crash, pulling Wall Street and London down after it.

This was credited with a 37.5p fall in Unilever, down to 612.5p, and Rediff & Co., 25.5p cheaper at 715p.

He also said that investors with little knowledge of finance were creating the Internet "bubble" which would soon burst.

His words were eagerly followed by London dealers waiting for the first sign that the Internet craze will implode.

Suddenly, having an Internet-sounding name was no longer enough. The dramatic fall of On-Line, off 53 per cent at 129p, was followed by Virtuanet, off 107.5p to 205p, Voss Net, down 22p to 57.5p and Netcall, 18p cheaper at 67p.

These are all AIM-listed companies, and dealers on the junior exchange say they have never been so busy.

One said: "It was all private clients who've seen their money doubled every day. It was getting silly — Netcall is a telecoms company, but its name suggests otherwise so it's up it.

The profit-taking also claimed victims amongst the FTSE 250 camp and WH Smith, seen by optimists as the next Amazon.com, fell 7 per cent to 57p.

Its shares have been in orbit since it agreed to buy AIM-listed Helicon Publishing, steady at 100p, becoming Britain's largest Internet bookseller.

Dixons, which connects 900,000 subscribers to the Internet for free, was also losing



John Mayo, finance director, spent £262,000 of his own money buying GEC stock. The shares rose 4p yesterday

the covered status of quasi-Internet stock — falling 29p to 303.5p.

Smaller companies left out by the first phase of the Internet frenzy — usually those who make profits — continued to rank amongst the fastest-climbing small companies yesterday.

Intelligent Environments was the fastest riser, 32 per

cent better at 90p. Epic Group, which produces CD-Roms, was 4p better at 25p.

Internet Technology was 21 per cent higher at 172p and rival Easynet rose 36p to 280p. They both connect users to the Internet, and their shares had suffered on fears that the likes of Dixons would steal their market by offering free access.

Recognition Systems shot

up 26 per cent — but it is a penny share and the advance was 4p to 20p. Much of the high-percentage gains on recent weeks have come from AIM's main selling point: the smaller they come, the faster they rise.

This has certainly worked for Arcadia, up 30.5p at 167p on relief that it did not have any surprises in its Christmas trading statement. In theory, this is its best day yet on the stock market even though the 22 per cent rise takes the shares back to December levels.

No such luck for Alldays, the convenience store chain of another 25p at 67.5p. The fear is now that the "cashflow problems" it alluded to in its trading statement could mean breach of the banking covenants.

Buy raiders who did so well out of Bookers, off another penny to a new low of 40p, are seeing Alldays a chance to revive their success.

The two companies both have the same problem — not so much sales, but sorting out the distribution between warehouse and shop.

After having agreed a £1 billion merger, GEC does not look particularly vulnerable, adding 4p to 529.5p. But John Mayo, its finance director, said yesterday he had spent £262,000 of his own money buying another 50,000 shares at 524.5p apiece.

The recent rumblings over First Leisure, tipped as a takeover target for Luminar, took a new turn yesterday on rumour that the deal may be construed the other way round.

Industry sources believe Michael Grade, the cigar-chomping chief executive of First Leisure, and Stephen Thomas, his counterpart at Luminar, are contemplating a merger that could be couched as a nil-premium deal.

□ GILT-EDGED: The British Chamber of Commerce survey made for a cheery day in the futures pit, confirming tough conditions for the service sector. Treasury 10 per cent 2001 added five ticks to 110.5p. Treasury 8 per cent 2015 was up 6.5p to 115.56.

□ NEW YORK: After falling at the opening of trade as Brazilian stocks plunged, shares saw some recovery in the morning trade. By midday the Dow Jones industrial average was down 8.49 points at 9,327.42.



IT HAS been a phenomenal fortnight for the Alternative Investment Market. Since Monday last week, seven of London's ten best risers have been listed on the junior exchange.

But to look at the FTSE AIM index, you would think nothing had happened.

Size is the problem. The index is weighted — so the fortunes of the hundreds of smaller companies are ironed out by judges in the dozen stocks capitalised at over £100 million.

But the likes of Virtualbank, Infobank and Netcall demonstrate the kind of casino-like returns that only AIM is capable of generating — and are a reminder of why there is much more to the market than suggested by its index.

AIM has its bowlers, and its members usually fill the worst-faller tables as well.

But the likes of Virtualbank, Infobank and Netcall demonstrate the kind of casino-like returns that only AIM is capable of generating — and are a reminder of why there is much more to the market than suggested by its index.

Prices open lower 12/1/98

THE TIMES UNIT TRUST INFORMATION SERVICE



THEATRE

TOOTSIE
FOR MICHAEL
JORDAN

THE TIMES

ARTS



POP

Hollywood is never short of people tossing bizarre wigs at each other. You have heard of vanity publishing? Well, this is vanity suing. But even hardened observers of Tinseltown trauma are awestruck by the latest wacky courtroom tiff. A Los Angeles judge is at present pondering whether Dustin Hoffman, a movie star of the most dogged Method-Acting persuasion, should be awarded \$5 million in damages because *Los Angeles* magazine depicted him in a woman's dress without seeking his permission.

Students of motion-picture history will realise that there are complex cultural references involved here. In his 1982 hit *Tootsie*, Hoffman did indeed dress up as a woman — and very ravishing he looked, too. So why is the magazine being sued? Apparently because it showed Hoffman in the *wrong sort of dress*. Using computer technology it doctorred the *Tootsie* poster, removing a rather M&S-style red gown from Hoffman's little body and replacing it with a fetching off-the-shoulder number. The altered

picture was then put on the fashion pages with the caption "Dustin Hoffman isn't a drag in a butter-colored silk gown by Richard Tyler and Ralph Lauren heels."

Had such an unauthorised vision of loveliness appeared in an advertisement, Hoffman's case for compensation would be much stronger: his image would clearly have been exploited for commercial gain. But Hoffman cannily claims that magazine's fashion-spread is virtually an advertisement for the clothes portrayed.

Nonsense, the magazine retorts. Fashion pages are editorial, and therefore protected by the First Amendment. I leave historians to ponder whether Benjamin Franklin and company intended the noble prose of the American Constitution to be applied to the case of a cross-dressing actor depicted in a frock that is not his own. It's not impossible, I suppose.

Anyway, Hoffman — who seems to live in an irony-free zone — says that his "right of publicity" has been violated. On the other hand, *Los Angeles* magazine's position is also not without ironies. After all, it is owned by Disney, one of the world's most litigious organisations when protecting its own sacred Mickey Mouse trademark.

Of course there are bigger issues involved here than Hoffman's bust size. The phrase "the camera never lies" has always been one of the world's great lies. People have been tampering with photographs since snapping began. Either it has been done whimsically, as in that celebrated 1917 "proof" of fairies at the bottom of someone's garden; or for more sinister reasons, as when banished ministers disappeared retrospectively from official photographs in Stalin's Russia.

But computers have made photograph manipulation much more so-

plicated. For instance, I could approach some mischievous operative in *The Times* graphics department with two perfectly sober photographs of, say, Miss Melinda Messenger and the Archbishop of Canterbury — and within minutes we could fiddle the originals so that these two pillars of British society

appeared to be caught in the most thrilling conjunction.

Nor is this dangerous technological alchemy confined to still images. So many television advertisements now tamper with old films in the cause of flogging new cars (think of Dennis Hopper appearing to motor past his younger self in *Easy Rider*) that the trick has become a cliché. Now there is talk of creating "new" Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo movies. The computer will digitally store the screen legend's characteristic body movements and vocal traits, then feed them as required into new scenes and dialogue.

A macabre idea? Perhaps, but I bet the interest will be enormous. After all, tomorrow a vast crowd will gather at Wembley Arena for *Elvis Presley — The Concert*, in which the voice and screen image of the pelvily mobile one will be meshed electronically with live

backing from his former associates. This marks the first time that an entertainer who is no longer living has headlined a concert," the promoters say. Oh really? Have they never seen the Royal Variety Performance?

You don't have to be Mystic Morrison to foresee image manipulation becoming one of the big legal battlegrounds. More and more celebrities will be going to court, *a la* Dustin, to protect their "right of publicity". Learned friends will have a ball.

And what about the rights of the dead? Who is to say that Garbo would have approved of her computerised image eerily presiding over some sultry new drama? Surely at this late stage in her career she really might want to be alone.

The easy answer is "her heirs and estate will protect her". But one's dearly beloved relatives are

not necessarily the most scrupulous guardians of one's posthumous reputation, especially if they can smell money in the air. Has Jacqueline du Pré been well served by her sister? I merely ask.

The fact is that computerised image manipulation, like genetic engineering, has leapt out at us before we have had time to devise a relevant code of ethics. But the genie can't be stuffed back into the bottle now. People in public life probably have to accept that if they want to breathe the heady oxygen of publicity they must renounce control of their image for ever. There's no point in suddenly shouting at the media, in the immortal words of the Princess Royal, "Why don't you just haff off?" They won't.

So all in all, I think Dustin has been a bit daft. Mind you, if *Los Angeles* magazine ever depicts me in a Richard Tyler silk gown I shall certainly sue. For one thing, the Editor has exclusive serialisation rights to the bodies of all *Times* journalists. For another, I never wear anything except Armani. And a string vest in winter, of course.

Guns and girls were all Greek to us

OPERA



As someone sings in *The Mikado*, "and I am right, and you are right, and everything is quite correct," which just about sums up Paul Barker's new children's opera, given just two performances on Wednesday and Thursday by Lontano and the New London Children's Choir. The general message is that war is simply frightful and killing people awfully wrong, something that those who go to opera in Western Europe have more or less hoisted it, but maybe Lontano is planning an extensive tour of the Balkans, followed by a run at the Pentagon.

The piece is also written for girls only, 26 of them, but after that the correctness starts to

wear a bit thin. *Stone Angels* lasts for about 40 minutes, and there is a long synopsis in the programme, a wise precaution since without it even the most warm-hearted audience would be hard put to know what on earth was going on.

Roughly speaking, survivors of an air crash on an island off Greece encounter two groups of girls: Stoners (proper little Ladies of the Flies, nasty) and Glocks (peaceable, nice). War is raging overhead.

Barker is an experienced opera composer and cannot be accused of writing down to his performers: tricky intervals

and rhythms, vocal lines hard to pitch. Fine, but the children — all of whom deserve highest praise — had to concentrate so hard on their music that words took second place and were often inaudible, and passages in Greek were no help. There was a great deal of speech and melodrama, and neat differentiation of musical language for the two groups. Odaline de la Martinez conducted the five-strong Lontano chamber group efficiently.

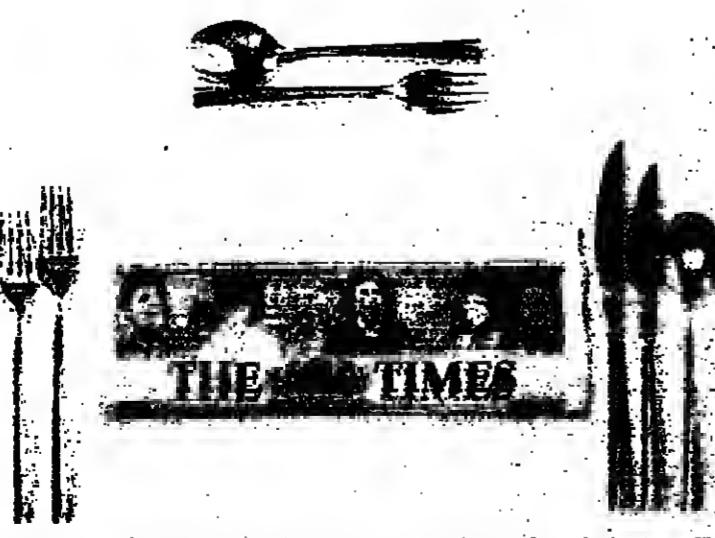
The main point of interest in the evening was how it all came to pass. The absence of anyone to pull it into some sort of coherent dramatic shape proved fatal.

RODNEY MILNES



St Trinian's revisited: members of the excellent New London Children's Choir struggle through the chaotic *Stone Angels*

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CHANGING TIMES

Magic circle

CONCERTS

Goehrfest is the pithy, if less than elegant, title of an enterprising series of concerts taking place in Cambridge over the next couple of months. The occasion is the retirement of Alexander Goehr, who has been Professor of Music at Cambridge University since 1976, but the opportunity has been taken to celebrate and promote the work of the many composers who have come within Goehr's orbit over the past quarter-century. Robin Holloway and Hugh Wood, along with Goehr himself, have been at the centre of this circle, but younger generations too (George Benjamin, Julian Anderson, Thomas Ades and many others) have come to prominence and all are represented in Goehrfest.

For the opening concert on Wednesday night in the West Road Concert Hall, the University Quartet in Residence, the Endellion String Quartet, gave a neatly balanced programme of Haydn, Schumann and Goehr (the latter's String Quartet No 3, dating

from 1975-76). If the first movement of the Goehr was modelled to some extent by the composer's own admission, on Beethoven (specifically the E Minor Piano Sonata Op 90), then the second movement recalls Haydn in its quizzically conversational phrase endings. The third movement is altogether more opaque, however, more densely argued, and the Endellion steered an adroit course through these difficult waters.

In Haydn's Quartet in D Major Op 71 No 2 the ensemble's close rapport enabled it to explore a range of moods over the course of the four movements. Well-sprung rhythms gave a buoyant feel to the faster passages, while the Adagio cantabile was as songful as its title implies.

Schumann's debt to Beethoven in his A Minor Quartet Op 41 No 1 is rather more explicit than Goehr's. In the Adagio, the long-breathed main theme inevitably recalls the slow movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The Endellion succeeded in sustaining these arching lines throughout the movement, and offered a smoothly contoured, rather than sharply defined discourse in the first movement. Despite Schumann's dedication of the quartet to Mendelssohn, they perhaps rightly treated the Scherzo not as one of that composer's elfin creations but as a sturdier, more passionate utterance.

BARRY MILLINGTON

Going solo

CONCERTS

We've seen the conductor, or we've admired the soprano wife and now we've heard the instrumentalist. Or some of us have. The prospect of witnessing Sakari Oramo's first appearance as a violinist in Symphony Hall, directing the strings of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in Bach's Concerto in E major while coping with the solo part, proved to be a less than irresistible attraction.

Bearing in mind the rest of the eccentrically compiled programme, which included also Jean-Féry Rebel's *Les Éléments* and Brahms's Second Symphony, it is not very surprising.

Obviously, those who stayed away are not to be credited with any kind of prescience but the fact is, it was not a particularly persuasive performance of the Bach. It was intelligently phrased and coloured and, though not exactly authentic, it was more than acceptably stylish. The violin line seemed thin in these acoustic conditions, however, and there was not much improvement in this respect even when the soloist-director's nerves settled down and what had been

an overbright sound relaxed into something less edgy.

After the Bach, it made good musical sense, if not good box office, to go on to another more work of a quite different kind. The beginning of *Les Éléments*, which opens with a prelude called *Chaos* and with dissonant harmonies based on a chord of the 13th, is quite astonishing. The pre-Strauss use of two piccolos to represent birdsong and the pre-Wagner fire music are less sensational but no less interesting. It was difficult, on the other hand, to believe in the legitimacy of the screech-like yelps from members of the orchestra in the *Tambourin*. Until a smart musicologist demonstrates the authenticity of these interventions scepticism is not out of order.

As the most Baroque-minded of the great composers of the 19th century, Brahms was well placed in the second half of the concert. It was reassuring to hear the Second Symphony so well done in the traditionally mellow, lyrical manner with nothing too urgent or querulous about it, with a splendidly sonorous orchestral presence, sensitively shaped instrumental solos and a powerfully cumulative structural purpose. If the brass-laden ending seemed more manic than triumphant, more in the manner of Tchaikovsky than Brahms, that was the one miscalculation in an otherwise idiomatically and perceptively characterised interpretation.

GERALD LARNER

Still under a cloud

Robert Holman's play *Bad Weather* has not improved on the journey from Stratford to the Barbican. Set on a rough Middlesbrough housing estate, all broken windows, families and lives, it purports to question whether environment up-brings or innate character breeds bad behaviour. Every so often, a thoughtful and subtle idea raises its head, only to sink under the weight of an under-articulated script.

Teenage troublemaker Jamie is on trial for a crime committed by his friend Luke, whose 17-year-old sister Rhona is carrying Jamie's child. Rhona tries to convince Luke to confess; Jamie's mother Kay is not so sure, since she turns out to care more for Luke than her son. Noel, a juror who believes in Jamie's innocence, pitches

in by starting an adulterous affair with Kay, and he and Rhona summon Kay's old French nanny to sort things out.

French nannies? Council estates? Implausibly, Kay is the heir to a viceregal fortune trifled away by a spendthrift mother. This allows everyone (except poor Jamie, who has been put away for four years) to up sticks and go picnicking in the Loire, where the sadistically severe nanny succumbs to the adolescent attractions of Luke, and like Kay refuses to trade him in for Jamie's freedom. Silly enough anyway; but unfortunately, Paul Poplewell's callow, charming Luke makes a wholly unconvincing sex-god, which torpedoes any last shred of credibility.

To often the dialogue is artificial, and though a constant if studied, intensity holds the attention, Steven Finn's static direction fails to liven things up. But there are incidental pleasures. The promising Emma Handy yaks away engagingly as spiky mouthy Rhona, and Ryan Pope's forceful Jamie manages to balance whining self-pity with residual pride. Susan Brown as Kay is frequently touching, though she doesn't do much with her. The unobtrusive set, all grain-daubed metal, shatters and concrete slabs — a bit like the Barbican — gives good service.

"It's all degrees, a bit of knowledge here, a bit of understanding there. It's all a mess," says Luke towards the end. To be charitable, maybe Holman intended to suggest that understanding, motivations, ascribing guilt is an impossible task. If so, it does not make for gripping drama. A brave play, but ultimately unrewarding.

NIGEL CLIFF



Caught in the Bard's Viennese whirl: Robert Glenister plays the Duke as a man propelled into a nervous breakdown, while Clare Holman is an Isabella pushed on to the sidelines

Beauty and a universal beast

Most actors playing the Duke begin *Measure for Measure* in fine princely style. They calmly hand over the running of Vienna to the puritanical Angelo and sedately leave for their sabbatical. Not in Michael Boyd's production. Robert Glenister slumps grey-faced in a chair with a gin bottle while extracts from *Revelation* play on the wooden wall behind him, and then, hearing his sides bearing down the door, totters down a walkway into the stalls. Angelo, Escalus et al are left to hear his instructions relayed to them via the sort of creaky gramophone you might have found in Schubert's Vienna, circa 1900.

It is awfully difficult to imagine what, if anything, the sense of Escalus's later claim, that the Duke is "a

gentleman of all temperances", yet I cannot regret it. One reason why *Measure for Measure* is classified as a problem play is that the Duke's motives in dissembling himself as a friar and spying on Angelo are hard to explain in any normal way: so hard that scholars have been impelled to see him as symbolising God; Christ, James, I, Heaven, knows whom. Glenister's Duke has, you feel, been propelled into a nervous breakdown by the confusions and contradictions, expectations and disappointments of exercising power in messy Vienna. How will a quite different kind of man — the cool, tough, stainless Angelo — deal with the pressures?

This embitters the play, a more overtly political tilt than usual, and, though I blinked at the moment

be sartorial trickiness with the quality of his acting.

Boxer's Angelo is aggressive, cynical, arrogantly self-confident, contemptuous of lesser mortals and, in his frosty, dispassionate way, very fond indeed of power. We have heard this man's dehumanising rhetoric in our own era: the all-too-credible vow to sacrifice his brother or son to some abstract "justice"; the frightening declaration that he shows most pity when he is harshest. "For then I pity those I do not know." He will no doubt be grimly spreading misery in the next century too, for he is a universal monster.

Boyd's approach, bold and even brilliant though it is, rewards some areas of the play more than others. The object of Angelo's predatory lust, Isabella, is somewhat sidelined, feel-

ingly played though she is by Clare Holman. But the brothel and jail scenes are pretty strong. When whores are lazily whipping transvestites, men, or the pimp Pompey is playing comically sadistic games with his fellow prisoners, you can see why Boxer's punitive Angelo has political appeal.

You can also see why Glenister's human, tolerant Duke has disappeared. His rendering of the great speech about the virtues of death comes across, not as a prolonged extract from the *Dictionary of Quotations*, but as a personal expression of ontological derision. After all, in a world as ungovernable as this, how does a good prince cope?

BENEDICT
NIGHTINGALE

HETTIE JUDAH

Positively uninhibited

In his new play Brad Fraser continues to make his characters jump through the hoops of love, sex and honesty. Is it possible, so his cartoonist hero Matt is presumably asking, to manage all three at the same time? Matt is gay, in a fitfully tolerant Toronto, and the immensely successful

creator of *Spun Boy* and *Fridge Magnet Girl*, whose adventures we see him developing with his working partner, Rachel. Played at the Royal Exchange by Ben Daniels, he is handsome, effervescent and projects the character's fierce intelligence, but he has now turned 30; none of his relation-

ships has lasted beyond three months, not even an early marriage (shown in Fraser's previous play, *Poor Super Man*).

If the fault lies not in himself, might it be a consequence of being gay, in a world predominantly straight, or living at the time of AIDS?

Airing these concerns, he embarks on an affair with Ian Gelder's politician, whose grill-fuelled domestic arrangements suggest successful hoop-jumping is nothing but desperate fantasy.

This is an uninhibited play about inhibitions. Matt's wit and honesty make him a thor-

oughly positive character, and Daniels and Ruth Lass create a convincing office relationship.

Doubts about the play surface in those areas where Fraser explores the serious follies of his politician, Martin. Here is a man who was a virgin till 35 and is now so keen to act as substitute dad to homeless waifs that he supports the soft drug habit of one and the fecklessness of another. Almost every scene where Gelder appears with young Rex (a flushed Daniel Roberts) or with the rather Yves (Nathan Wicks) ends with him digging into his pocket for more dollars.

Matt's openness is so placed as to contrast with Martin's complicated burden of anger, longing and grievous mistakes. The rage that can be felt by the Positive (as distinct from the simply positive) for those who are unaffected steals in upon us during the play's later scenes, and Matt's own dangerous "mistake" follows logically. But while the air of withholding plans and feelings suits the character as given, the sources of his compulsions remain out of reach.

Marianne Elliott's direction seems to be acknowledging this by closing with the five characters as far apart as possible on this open stage. At other times the openness works against audibility in a play of fast Canadian talk and cultural predilections. But if the play's centre retreats from us the outer reaches do capture the quality of disconcerted lifestyles that is Fraser's particular skill.

JEREMY KINGSTON

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■ POP ALBUMS

Snowpony impress

ARTS

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Critic's choice in Metro

Happy birthday suit to youth

Crazy name, crazy guys: Canada's Barenaked Ladies have put humour in the charts. Paul Sexton reports

Success in showbusiness has many occupational hazards, but they do not usually include being assaulted with packaged food. Such, though, is the lot of Barenaked Ladies, the Canadian band who put a decade of hard labour into their newfound North American stardom — their album, *Stunt*, has gone triple platinum in America — and who will be back on an English stage next week, dodging boxes of macaroni cheese.

To describe a Ladies concert as "lively" is like calling Bart Simpson "playful, and one of the joys of their beloved breakthrough" is that it proves that a sense of humour and creative excellence need not be oil and water in the rock world. As they proved on previous UK visits in less celebrated times, the Barenaked boys will charm total strangers with shows of manic, Goonish jollity and damn good tunes. Plus that unusual concert tradition where the Beatles got jelly beans and Jimi Hendrix gets knickers: this five-piece has bins of apple sauce and boxes of macaroni cheese lobbed at it.

"We're trying to curb that a little bit," says co-writer and singer Ed Robertson. "Have you gone all serious and arty, then? No," stresses bassist Jim Creeggan, they would just rather not play in hard hats: "Maybe one idiot in the audience would put a little more steam behind the throw and hit somebody. You get hit by food, it sucks." Robertson adds, philosophically: "But you know that going into rock 'n' roll..."

Last month at Madison Square Garden in New York, Barenaked Ladies performed at an all-star dinner staged by the city's top-rated pop radio station, Z100. Lesser men would have been daunted by an audience of screaming, dreamy ten-year-olds awaiting the appearance of pin-ups such as N Sync and '98 Degrees, but the band made

them all rock and roar, especially with a gloriously absurd closing medley that stapled together songs like *Gettin' Jiggy Wit It*, *My Heart Will Go On* and *Bittersweet Symphony*.

But, much as one smiles at their compositions such as *Be My Yoko Ono* and *If I Had \$1,000,000*, it would be misleading to file the Ladies in the novelty section. As they underline again on *Stunt* with songs such as *Alcohol* and *When You Dream*, they can do shade as well as light. "Our live shows are off the wall and fun," says Robertson, "but especially with the new record, people get a lot clearer picture of what the band's about musically. There's still fun on the record, but it's not as overt as it's been in the past."

I don't care when people use the word 'crazy' about us because sometimes we are ridiculous," but when it's used to detract from what the band does musically, then I have a problem with it, because for me those are two very separate things. People say 'You should do stand-up,' and we always say no. It's just that you don't expect to see a band that makes you laugh, but if you come along expecting a comedy night, you'd be very disappointed.

I like to think our music is like an honest conversation. If you're sitting with a friend over the course of an evening, you don't just make jokes all night and you don't talk serious all night."

Robertson's co-writer and singer, Steven Page, revealing some comic "capers" on those earlier UK gigs, senses a cultural kinship between Brits and Canadians. "There's a certain faction of Brits that clings for dear life to England," he says. "It's kind of the place that keeps us not being American. If we didn't have a fish and chip shop on the corner, or we weren't rushing home to see Coronation Street, we would be American."

AS ANY half-decent alternative rock band led by a woman might expect these days, Snowpony have been optimistically compared with Garbage and P.J. Harvey. Singer and songwriter Katharine Gifford certainly has a dark, 1990s twist to her lyrics: "I used to dream in black and white, but now I dream in red," she sings in the macabre *I Can Keep a Secret If I'm Dead*.

But the trio comprising former members of Stereolab, My Bloody Valentine and Moonshake — a sort of supergroup of glam — lacks the full-on approach of Garbage, and Gifford's glacial vocal delivery has little in common with Harvey's voodoo wail. Instead they combine some fairly conventional, chorus-free riffing with startling bursts of almost-dissonant horn parts that are inserted into the arrangements of numbers such as *Bad Sister* and *Snow White* like a poker thrust into the embers of a fire.

Neat little shards of feedback stab into the fabric of *Snow White* and a rogue star threads an erratic course through the dances, grooves of *Titanic*, while a church bell tolls the back of the mix. "Why do I get these headaches?" Gifford sings in *St Lucy's Gate*, a woozy psychedelic interlude that sounds like a bad dream set to music. The question may be rhetorical, but rarely has the product of a sore head sounded this smart and imaginative.

CASSIUS
1999
(Virgin 7243 8 46701 £15.99)
FATBOY SLIM may be at No 1 this week, but the post-Christmas album chart is not otherwise overrun with dance hits let alone French dance acts. However, like Air and Daft Punk, who were both successfully launched here at this

time in 1998 and 1997 respectively, the Parisian duo Cassius are about to make a mainstream splash with their cunningly titled debut, 1999.

Philippe Zdar and Hubert Blanc-Francat are, at 31, veterans of the French dance scene. They have produced three albums for rap star MC Solaar, made their own hip hop records as La Funk Mob and remixed the biggest hits of both Daft Punk (*Around the World*) and Air (*Say Boy*). The pair call their

music "urban electro funk", and their trick is to combine house beats with the sacerdotal syncopations invented by James Brown, producing an accessible brand of dancefloor funk-adroitly retooled for the rave generation.

They hit their stride midway through this album with *Mister Eveready*, *Nuife* and *Somebody*, a string of ingenious, minimalist grooves that have a simultaneously galvanising and hypnotic effect. An-



After a decade of hard slog, Barenaked Ladies have finally cracked it big time in America. The drawback to this, though, is that they get pelted with macaroni cheese more often

Street, we would be American.

Their ear for the absurdities of language has had audiences in this country in stitches as they played with newfound English phrases like toddlers in an Early Learning Centre. I remember them once constructing an entire song about Jeff's Cakes, and Page says they still get requests for it.

Whatever word happens to strike us, we play with," says drummer Tyler Stewart. "We talked about bops a lot, I remember. And slapper is one of our favourite words. We met these girls from Liverpool when we were there in 1996, I swear they were the original Spice Girls. They were so funny, drink you under the table,

witty Scouse birds. They used this word slapper all the time."

"I think the biggest thing

Canadians have in common with British people is that we both get embarrassed," says Page. "Americans just don't get embarrassed."

Page recalls the vexation of finding the acclaim for their shows in this country never translated into record sales, least of all in the Britpop era. "A song like Brian Wilson wasn't going to gel with Song 2 by Blur," he says. "We felt really on the verge of something in the UK, but each record never quite hit it, and by the time the third record, *Born On A Pi-*

rate Ship, came out, the ball was just dropped. We thought This is terrible, our chance has gone."

Their recent success is made more poignant by the current absence of keyboard player Kevin Hearn, now making a good recovery from leukaemia. "Now that he's recuperating, it's doubly frustrating for him that he can't be out here on tour with us," says Robertson. "It's a really hard thing when you feel like your career is at its pinnacle, but you're not celebrating it together."

The belated triumph of Barenaked Ladies is a tale of victory against the odds by a band that will not sit comfortably in any of the industry pigeonholes. "I like diversity in music, but it's hard to market," says Robertson. "There's so much music these days, everybody wants to be able to say what they're a cross between, like 'It's somewhere between U2 and Soul Coughing.' We are Herman's Hermits meets Henson's Muppets."

Barenaked Ladies play Shepherd's Bush Empire next Wednesday and the Forum, London N5, on Feb 13. The single One Week is released by Reprise on Feb 8, and the album *Stunt* on Feb 22. They will guest on the *Beautiful South* UK arena tour in April.

Cutting edge

MICHEL PORTAL

Dockings (Label Bleu LBLC

6604 HM £3)

THE multi-instrumentalist Michel Portal has always scorned genre boundaries, especially those between jazz and avant-garde classical music. A recent duo album with accordion player Richard Galliano, for instance, interspersed pieces by Astor Piazzolla and Hermelito Pascual with Balkan folk; a 1995 album, *Cinemas*, embraced everything from orchestral tango to Maghreb rhythms.

Here, with his front-line instruments augmented by Marcus Stockhausen's agile trumpet and propelled by the nervy but fluent piano of Bojan Zuljikaparic, Portal casts his musical net as widely as ever. There are vigorously scuffling clarinet improvisations over Bruno Chevillon's lithe bass and Joey Baron's scurrying drums, intricate ensemble pieces redolent of North Africa, and a plaintive waltz through Carla Bley's *Ida Lupino*, featuring Steve Swallow on singing electric bass. Another rich, texturally adventurous album from one of Europe's most imaginative musicians.

CHRIS PARKER

Pale horse of a different colour

NEW POP ALBUMS: It's being doomy and gloomy that makes Snowpony so cheering, says David Sinclair



If a migraine could sing, it would sound like Snowpony. Now there's an enticing prospect

time of year in 1998 and 1997 respectively, the Parisian duo Cassius are about to make a mainstream splash with their cunningly titled debut, 1999.

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Release Me, The Last Waltz and *A Man Without Love*, together with various standards and one or two new songs, all set to a thumping, end-of-the-pier disco beat with predictably extraneous results.

As well as the three producers, there are another three people credited solely for coming up with the "original concept" for this album. Humperdinck is not the only one who needs to think again.

FOXY BROWN

Chyna Doll (Def Jam/Mercury 553 933 £15.99)

OPENING with the (presumably simulated) sound of Foxy Brown being born, *Chyna Doll* is a broadly autobiographical album which spares the listener little in the way of detail. The rapper from Brooklyn is cursing, threatening and demanding respect almost before her feet have hit the ground, the only wrinkle in the plot being that the voice is that of a woman and not a man.

A succession of heavyweight stars, including the likes of Jay-Z, DMX and Memphis Bleek, are on hand to complement her vocal assets at strategic points throughout the album and she achieves a certain rough chemistry with her various partners on tracks such as *Bonnie & Clyde II* and *Can You Feel Me Baby*. But in the end it's all much too frightening to be sensible.

ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK

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CASSIUS

1999

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hits let alone French dance

acts. However, like Air and

Daft Punk, who were both suc-

cessfully launched here at this

TOP TEN ALBUMS

1 (20) You've Come a Long Way, Baby — Fatboy Slim (Sire)

2 (1) I've Been Expecting You — Robbie Williams (Chrysalis)

3 (2) Ladies & Gentlemen... The Best of — George Michael (Polydor)

4 (3) Where We Belong — Boyzone (Columbia)

5 (4) Talk on Corners — Daft Punk (Parlophone)

6 (5) Stop — Daft Punk (Parlophone)

7 (7) Memory — Air (Mute)

8 (8) Footloose — Madonna (Maverick)

9 (9) The Best of — U2 (Island)

10 (10) The Best of — M People (M People)

11 (11) The Best of — Robbie Williams (Sire)

12 (12) The Best of — Robbie Williams (Sire)

13 (13) The Best of — Robbie Williams (Sire)

14 (14) The Best of — Robbie Williams (Sire)

15 (15) The Best of — Robbie Williams (Sire)

16 (16) The Best of — Robbie Williams (Sire)

17 (17) The Best of — Robbie Williams (Sire)

18 (18) The Best of — Robbie Williams (Sire)

19 (19) The Best of — Robbie Williams (Sire)

20 (20) The Best of — Robbie Williams (Sire)

21 (21) The Best of — Robbie Williams (Sire)

22 (22) The Best of — Robbie Williams (Sire)

A change of culture

A reconstructed IPC aims for a bold new future, says Raymond Snoddy

On a wall of Mike Matthew's 17th-floor office overlooking the Thames there are framed copies of ancient publications such as the *Strand Magazine* and *Tibbles*, which were owned by IPC and its predecessors.

In a new corporate brochure produced by IPC, still the largest consumer magazine company in the UK, the titles are colour-coded according to age. Nine magazines have purple spots against them, indicating that they were launched before 1899, ranging from *Country Life*, *The Field and Shooting Times* & *Country Magazine* to *Amateur Photographer*, *Gardening*, and *Cycling Weekly*.

"I am a custodian really, just passing through," says 51-year-old Matthew, who has worked for IPC for the past 28 years.

Proposed against another wall is a board that is covered in handwritten paper stickers. It represents the magazine company's ambitions for the future — which include joining the FTSE 100 and launching a magazine every year that matches the triumph of *Londred*, IPC's hugely successful title for young men.

Matthew does not know whether such things are possible but he is going to try over the next ten years. The "ambitions" board is just one aspect to a corporate makeover announced this month to make IPC more "feet of foot" following last year's £860 million buyout from Reed Elsevier, the Anglo-Dutch information group.

During the last years of Reed ownership IPC felt like an unloved stepchild. Reed made no secret that

it wanted to specialise in professional and business information — and that it was only a matter of time before IPC would be sold.

The issue came to a head when Matthew was refused permission to bid for *Telesat*, the French TV listings magazine — which is now owned by Emap, IPC's great rival in the magazine market.

Matthew, who was also unable to get the marketing budgets he thought he needed, saw it as the last straw and warned Reed that he planned to retire this year. He believes the potential loss of his chief executive, at the least, "crystallised" the decision to sell.

"I would have ended up presiding over the rise of IPC and its decline, and I wasn't prepared to manage decline," he says.

Now Matthew, with the non-executive chairman David Aronius, who worked at Emap for many

years, has drawn up his own plan for restructuring the company, which owns some of the UK's best-known magazines, including *Woman* and *Marie Claire* (in a joint venture), *Ideal Home* and *TV Times*. "We have been a bit too business-oriented," says Matthew, "and a bit too control-freakish. We need to relax and let a bit more creativity through. We are no longer constrained by Reed Elsevier. We can rewrite our culture."

Matthew entered the magazine industry as a junior in the copy department of George Newnes, later to become part of IPC Magazines. He had no qualifications other than what he calls "a sense of destiny" — a belief that he would not turn out to be average. The man



Old hand, new ideas: Mike Matthew, the chief executive of IPC, believes in greater editorial autonomy

who will be a multimillionaire when IPC floats on the Stock Exchange in two or three years was brought up in difficult circumstances in Sevenoaks, Kent, after his father, a motor mechanic, left when Matthew was eight. He still remembers the humiliation of standing up among classmates to get free school dinner tickets.

The IPC reconstruction, which will give its five divisions greater autonomy, has its darker side. About 200 jobs will go, many of them Matthew's senior colleagues.

The first wave of eight have just departed. To achieve a flatter management structure, the role of editor-in-chief is going and there will be fewer publishers. In future, editors will report to their managing directors. The reality is that Iris Burton, the Editor-in-Chief of half the women's titles and a former Edi-

tor of both *Woman's Realm* and *Woman's Weekly*, is leaving — as is David Durman, the Editor-in-Chief of the other half. Another casualty is Andrew Taylor, the publisher of specific women's interest titles. "Mike is bleeding on this. These are people he has worked with and probably employed," says Terry Mansfield, the managing director of the rival National Magazine Company. The closure of *Options*, though not part of the restructuring, could cost another 17 jobs.

Matthew denies that IPC, backed by the venture capital group CenVen, overpaid for the company, thus leading to the redundancies.

He accepts that IPC's production figures for the first half of last year were bad. The figures for the second half, out next month, will, he says, show that IPC is on the way back. Matthew believes he will

have succeeded if in a year IPC is more dynamic and taking advantage of the huge number of opportunities in the media market.

These range from masthead publishing — TV shows linked to magazine titles — to magazine-related exhibitions and electronic publishing.

He makes no secret of the fact that he is looking for major acquisitions in the UK and would be interested in moving into business-to-business, or trade publishing.

Wouldn't it be lovely, he muses, if he was able to buy Reed Business Publishing or *New Scientist*, magazines that Reed Elsevier held on to.

He is not interested in reconstructing another part of IPC history — buying *The Mirror*, now the subject of takeover attempts. That would be too extraordinary an idea even for the pieces of paper on Matthew's strategic intent board.

Mandi vacates Cosmo chair

MANDI NORWOOD, the Editor of National Magazines's *Cosmopolitan*, has been promoted to Editor-in-Chief after turning down an offer from rivals IPC to edit *Marie Claire*. Press Gazette says that she will still oversee the day to day running of *Cosmo* but will also work on new titles. She will be replaced as Editor of *Cosmo* among names being touted are Dawn Bebe the former Editor of *New Woman*, Fiona McIntosh of *Elle* and Emma Soames, the Editor of *The Telegraph Magazine*.

only two awards for ITV, both won by the same programme — *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* which was named as the best new programme and the best light entertainment.

■ **CHANGING FACES:** who's going where Charles Courier, James Sykes, Martin Thomas and Lea Gregory to head Media Edge Europe, Young & Rubicam's revamped European operation. All from other parts of Y & R (Media Week).

Greg Grunner to be a managing partner at Optimedia, from CIA Mediawork (Campaign).

Dave Amer, from Turner Entertainment, to be sales and marketing director for Beeb, the BBC's commercial Internet operation (Marketing).

Chris Wermann to be head of PR and Miles Russell public affairs manager for Direct Line. Wermann from Financial Dynamics, Russell from Burton Marsteller. Roger Lowry moving to Burton Marsteller after six years with the Liberal Democrats (PR Week).

Patrick Weever quits as deputy city editor of *The Sunday Telegraph* (Press Gazette).

■ **MOVING HOUSE:** who's getting the business.

Nationwide Building Society reviewing its £8 million account at present with Legas Delaney Delaney Fletcher Bozell wins £2 million Harmony hairdresser account BMP DDB to create a £1 million press campaign for Bentley cars, now owned by Volkswagen (Campaign).

The publisher Mills & Boon hires Band and Brown to handle its PR: the recruitment agency Office Angels engages the Red Consultancy to promote the brand (PR Week).

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Amanda Platell, left, was fired from *The Express on Sunday* by Rosie Boycott, Editor-in-Chief, right, after sales dipped below one million — and after running a contentious story on Peter Mandelson

No answer to the P45 question

After the firing of Amanda Platell this week, *The Express on Sunday* has lost its fifth editor in six years, and the question has been asked: is how much moneymaking a newspaper that only years ago was the undisputed champion of Middle England endure? If it was an animal we might spare its suffering if put to sleep.

Platell fell out with Rosie Boycott, Editor-in-Chief of *The Express* and *The Express on Sunday*, in November when she published a report about a friendship between the former Cabinet Minister Peter Mandelson (a friend and neighbour of Boycott) and a Brazilian student in the UK in which Mandelson was said to be a homosexual. The truth of the row is difficult to tell but Platell believed that Boycott had sanctioned the story. Boycott believed that she had beenised. What is not in doubt is that the day of publication Mandelson delivered a handwritten note to Boycott's home; that Lord of the Express, proprieator of Labour peer, made his rounds to the *Express* news-

Boycott has fired Platell from the *Express* but will she herself survive?

desk; and that the story was read to Mandelson, after which substantial cuts were made.

Three weeks later Platell read in *The Spectator* that her job had been offered to Sarah Sands, deputy editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, who had turned it down. Platell won a reprieve, partly because Paper Round pointed out that editors-in-chief ought to accept ultimate responsibility for what appears in their papers — but Platell's head has undoubtedly been on the block since then.

When the axe fell this week, it chopped not only Platell but also veteran news editor Ian Larmer. Yesterday, associate editor Andrew Pierce, one of the authors of the Mandelson story, also walked the plank. He announced his resignation at a conference, saying he was sick of seeing the Sunday paper rubbish and adding that the high morale on the Sunday paper would now plummet to the level on the daily.

Platell is under an oath of silence but her supporters insist that Mandelson had vowed he

would destroy her career. Boycott's associates insist that Mandelson had nothing to do with the decision, as he has stated through his spokesman. The decision that she should go was made before the Mandelson saga, they say.

Boycott is the boss and she and Platell are different personalities who were bound to clash. Where Boycott is broadsheet, liberal, cerebral (a judge of this year's Whitbread Prize), Platell is a red-top tabloid veteran, an outgoing Aussie whom critics would say was over-promoted and the wrong editor for Boycott's *Express*.

Platell, moreover, was steering the Sunday paper in a different direction from the daily. Boycott embarked on one of the most daring or foolhardy acts in tabloid history by surrounding her

self with broadsheet journalists and transforming the once-Tory and ultra-traditional Express into a New Age, new Labour newspaper for the new millennium.

The P45 question is whether she can win enough new, younger readers without alienating the older readership.

Platell, it seems, ignored the evolution of the daily and — as her staff would put it — made the Sunday paper brighter, breezier and more fun to read. What that means, as Boycott's deputy Chris Blackhurst told them yesterday, was that there was a "gulf in standards" between the daily and Sunday, his point of view being that Platell's paper was political off-message and too vulgar.

Another nail in Platell's coffin was delivered when sales of *The Express on Sunday* slumped last month to a historic low of 973,000. *Express* conspiracy theorists say Boycott, seeking to worsen Platell's plight, cancelled the TV advertising for the Sunday title that would have kept sales above a million — and add that the *Express* TV ad campaign makes no mention of the Sunday.

Blackhurst and Michael Pilgrim now take the helm. Both worked with Boycott on *The Independent* and will need all the help they can get. *The Express on Sunday* has a staff of only 26 — compared with nearly 200 on *The Mail on Sunday* — and has suffered continual redundancies.

The cuts show at critical moments, such as 11pm last Saturday when the runaway foster parents Jeff and Jenny Brumley returned to Britain. Simon Waller, deputy editor, had to find a cash machine so that two remaining subs, due to finish their shift at midnight and catch the last train, could stay to finish the story and get home by cab. He paid the bill from his own pocket.

Sales this month are down 150,000 on a year ago. Within five years average issue readership has fallen from 4.7 million to 2.7 million. Advertising volume is down four per cent but up nearly four per cent for *The MoS*. Meanwhile *The MoS*, launched only in 1982, is selling nearly 2.3 million, up 130,000 on last year.

Seen from Boycott's chair, the logic of firing Platell is impeccable. The Sunday title will now be on-side and on-message. That, however, makes the pressure on her still greater. Since she took the chair last May, sales of *The Express* have fallen by 88,000. If her high-wire act is to succeed, which many doubt, she needs long-term commitment from Hollick and editorial stability.

The late Sir David English used to say that the instinct that made great editors worked for only one newspaper, that what made him a natural *Mail* Editor would not have worked for *The Sunday Times*. The tragedy for Rosie Boycott may be that a natural Editor of *The Independent on Sunday* (which she was) is not a natural Editor of *The Express*. Can she prove the cynics wrong?

Is Dyke the man to take over from Birt?

The Conservatives are preparing to raise the issue of "cronyism" if, as seems likely, Greg Dyke, the chairman of Pearson Television, emerges as a serious candidate to become the next Director-General of the BBC.

Mr Dyke, a multimillionaire from his days as chief executive of London Weekend Television, is a committed supporter of new Labour and one of a group, many with media connections, who sponsored the office of Tony Blair before the last election.

Peter Ainsworth, the Shadow Minister for Culture, Media and Sport, says that the job of Director-General of the BBC was so important that anyone who held the office should be "seen to be beyond reproach in political terms".

"I would advise the Chairman of the BBC to think very carefully about appointing anyone directly involved in sponsoring Mr Blair's office," says Mr Ainsworth.

The BBC is about to appoint head-hunters to find a Director-General to replace Sir John Birt, who plans to leave in April 2000. The aim is to choose a candidate by the summer and to have that person in place by the autumn, to spend some time working in tandem with Sir John. The race is unusually open with at least five internal and five external candidates.

Mr Dyke is attracting increasing attention because he is by nature an iconoclast with strong programme-making credentials and has a close relationship with Sir Christopher Bland, the BBC Chairman, from their days at LWT.

Dyke has not yet definitely made up his mind to "throw his hat in the ring", but even senior colleagues at Pearson concede privately that they would not stand in his way if the offer were made. The role of Director-General of the BBC is still seen as one of the plum jobs in world broadcasting.

It is unlikely that the Governors of the BBC would automatically rule out Mr Dyke because of his political connections. After all, Sir Christopher is a former Conservative local councillor and former chairman of the Conservative Boys' Group. The issue would be whether Mr Dyke would be prepared to renounce his overt political support for new Labour. It is believed that he did not contribute to Labour Party funds while he was a broadcaster at LWT.

Friends say that if Mr Dyke decided to stand for the post, his aim would be to simplify the BBC bureaucracy and to give greater encouragement to programme-makers.

Before joining LWT in 1987, Mr Dyke, who started his career as a local newspaper reporter in West London, was director of programmes at TV-am, the commercial breakfast station. Both TV-am and TVS lost their licences in the 1991 tenders for new ITV franchises.

RAYMOND SNODDY

The death of L!ve is on the cards

WDEVER wins the battle for Mirror Group Newspapers, it is thought unlikely that L!ve TV will survive, or that new *Sporting Life* will go ahead. By shutting down L!ve media experts reckon that the group would save between £8 million and £10 million a year, while the most likely purchaser, Chris Oakley, a former director of MC, has always been sceptical about starting up a new national sports paper.

U TV, that peddler of vacuous programming immortals in the BBC documentary "ignorance at Canary Wharf", has failed as a local cable television network, but it

Radio, to sit at a studio microphone alongside the breakfast presenter David Banks.

Makers of television documentaries ought to be banging down the doors at Talk for Kelvin is still up to his old tricks. As reported here last week, Carole Stone, a former producer of *Any Questions* on Radio 4, was invited to oversee its new Thursday night debate. But by Friday evening, after receiving a telephone call from Kelvin, she had backed off from further involvement in the project, murmuring the words: "interesting, instructive."

She had thought that MacKenzie wanted serious discussions about, say, the euro. What he really had in mind was such topics as "why Sean Connery is moving back to Scotland from Spain", and celebrity panelists.

He is displaying a touching faith in his power to turn tabloid journalists into broadcasters: Jane Moore, the Sun columnist currently being tried out as a co-presenter with Scott Chisholm, moves next week to a new show, *My Favourite Year*, which consists of an interview with a celebrity, interspersed with news clips and music from the year in question. The format was devised by Kelvin's journalist daughter Kershaw.

FOR THE first time BBC News has introduced compulsory redundancies among its senior current affairs producers, and up to 17 face the chop. The reason: the television service, which is already winning battles to make daily news more accessible,

has mainly become a brand. Perhaps it could survive as a niched-up national channel? as, agreements with the cable industry — guaranteeing a bedrock income — haven't five years to run, and a great inspirer, Kelvin MacKenzie, is pouring his energy into Talk Radio. Surely someone will give the News Bum hutch space?

AS THIS uncertainty about who helps to explain why Kelvin MacKenzie was able to outwit Nick Ferrari, L!ve's former director of programmes, across so

far, has taken its revenge over the boring quality of most specialist weekly current affairs series on law, housing and education, that were once so loved by Sir John Birt.

Staff at the television service were able to act because guaranteed funding has been removed by BBC News and nobody else would pick up the tab. Of the roster, only *Black Britain* survives. Instead, the BBC News chief executive, Tony Hall, is setting aside £1 million for special topical programmes, such as the current *Inside the Lords* on BBC2. The inside view is that arrogant BBC News executives took too little notice of their critics, believing that as they were producing public service programming, they would be safe.

The bigger point is a serious one: if the BBC does not produce programmes on social policy issues, then nobody else will either.

QUIET celebrations are under way at *The Observer*. The newspaper, the only Sunday broadsheet to register a rise in sales in December, has moved back above the psychologically important target of 400,000 this month, touching 430,000 last week. This was despite efforts by the *Independent on Sunday* to spike *The Observer's* revamp to spike its own cover price to 50p.

Roger Alton, the Editor of *The Observer*, says: "We've got some great people here. I just hope to keep it up." He adds:

"My biggest challenge is to keep traditional readers while appealing to the new."

The *Independent*'s Editor-in-Chief, Simon Kelner, in part of a wider shake-up across both titles, has reacted by sending across his right-hand man, Tristan Davies, to work alongside the *MoS* Editor, Kim Fletcher, the former deputy editor of *The Sunday Telegraph*, on some form of swift redesign.

HE WHO pays the piper calls the tune? This thought popped into my head at the launch of *Public Purposes in Broadcasting: Funding the BBC*, a grand event at Carlton House Terrace, where eight of Britain's leading economists gave brief resumes of their worthy contributions to the sponsored book.

Funny enough none of them fundamentally questions the existence of the licence fee, or threatens to keep the BBC Chairman Sir Christopher Blackadar awake at night. The fees

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Millennium man? Rowan Atkinson as Blackadder



To starry-sky logo, a new promotion campaign and updated jingles are part of Mark Byford's drive to give the World Service a global identity, which is instantly recognisable

A 'brand' new World Service

The BBC World Service may broadcast to the world — for the time being at least — but is it a global brand? This is the conundrum puzzling BBC managers and fuelling the latest row over proposals for further programme cuts.

The BBC says the service must be more "listener-focused" more commercially competitive and better promoted internationally to survive. But is it a corporation right?

Observers were quick to condemn at weekend's leaks of further programming cuts. Denying it reports, Mark Byford, the World Service chief executive, defended his defence in a letter to *The Guardian*, swearing the BBC's commitment to ongoing efficiency savings are some repositioning to maintain World Service's position as the world's leading international broadcaster.

Whale didn't say, however, whether this "repositioning" is well advanced. Managers are already rebranding and repositioning the service, with serial key developments introduced this month.

The new logo — a star-

ry night-sky motif — developed by the designers Lambie-Nairn as part of a unified approach to promoting the English-language service and the 45 local-language services that the World Service broadcasts. A promotional campaign is being developed by the advertising agency Leagas Delaney, and a company will be appointed soon to update on-air promotions and jingles.

A branded breakfast-show format, *The World Today*, is being rolled out across the World Service's three regional English-language zones. This means that listeners in America/Europe, Africa and Asia/Pacific will soon hear the same news-show format, although it will be produced and scheduled regionally. Other parts of the English-language output will be similarly reformed.

All of this is an investment to ensure future audiences. BBC managers say. But is it? "The most important thing is programming, not packag-

ing," one longstanding World Service producer laments. "Any attempt to refocus resources, such as cutting foreign-language output, is an attempt to narrow the World Service's output and will dilute the role it plays."

With the World Service directly funded by the Foreign Office, its traditional and unique role in promoting objective news and British values should be sacrosanct, many believe. Yet plans are said to affect cut services attracting low or failing audiences.

John Tusa, the former managing director of the World Service, says: "Just because you're sixth out of eight [in terms of listeners] in the Far East doesn't mean you are not important. Unless you have a total view of how the English service fits with local-language services, you cannot draw sensible conclusions. There is some evidence that where both English and local-language services are available,

locally in a variety of ways. Perceptions of the World Service also vary. Many listeners relied on it as an impartial provider of accurate news, others viewed it primarily as an educational tool, while for many more it provided a welcome reminder of home."

"Our brief," says Liz Dunning, the marketing director of Lambie-Nairn, "was to develop a more coherent World Service brand. You build strong global brands by having just one way of saying Coca-Cola is Coca-Cola, or Marlboro is Marlboro." To this end, BBC World Service is being promoted, from this month, as "the world's reference point" — visually depicted by stars in a night sky.

Sceptics, however, remain unconvinced that this ap-

proach is appropriate. "BBC World Service is a global brand already," Tusa says. "That's not to say it is seen in the same way all over the world. In each area where it is received, it means something different to local audiences. But this is a strength, not a weakness. They are looking at the brand in exactly the wrong sort of way."

Critics also question whether this approach can work if investment in programming — particularly the foreign-language output, which 100 million of the World Service's 134 million listeners currently tune in to — is reduced.

Exact details of how funding will be allocated over the next three years are expected in two weeks. But the steps that have already been taken towards unifying, standardising and publicising English-language output provide a grim indication of how the service's emphasis will change.

Film industry cries out for fresh script

A sensible person would not hold their breath waiting for the Government to do much to boost the UK's film and television industry. The most that can be expected in a good year is a modest tax concession.

There are a few hopeful signs of progress in the industry. This week Carlton Communications strengthened its television and film library with the \$150 million (£89 million) purchase of the ITC library, containing everything from *The Saint* to *On Golden Pond*.

Even film industry quangos, recycling public money in one way or another, do not have a sparkling record when it comes to backing potential hits. They seem irresistibly attracted to turkeys.

But symbolism and a little loving care can help. Yesterday Brian Wilson, the Trade Minister, set off for America on a trip around the British outposts of film and television.

He will be the first minister from the Department of Trade and Industry to visit the British Film Office in Los Angeles, set up after a recent review of film policy.

Next week he will visit the National Association of Television Program Executives exhibition in New Orleans, the largest television trade fair in the world, which is attended by delegates from more than 90 countries.

Seventy-six UK companies will be showing their wares there.

This ministerial attention for one of the UK's growth industries is welcome. Even more welcome is the fact that 70 of those companies received DTI grants to attend. Wilson recognises, however, that he has no magic wand to wave but at least his presence, interest and willingness to learn are encouraging.

For all the talk of the UK being a world-class player in film and television, the harsh reality is that in 1997 exports totalled a relatively modest £1.2 billion. In spite of the occasional Oscar, quality television and language advantage, the UK industry still had a trade deficit of £272 million.

The Government can help mainly in practical areas such as strengthening copyright and trying to boost exports. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport is trying to simplify the process of encouraging the film industry by putting together a single film industry body, although it is taking its time.

Companies such as Pearson have become thoroughly international through the purchase of programmes such as Grundy and All American. But Pearson's great weakness is that it does not own any broadcasters apart from its stake in Channel 5.

The "content is king" cliché may hold true to an extent but surely content and distribution are better. This is where the Government can help. Modest relaxation in broadcasting and merger rules would allow the creation of weightier British media companies that could tackle world markets, reverse the television and film deficit and prove that the British industry really is first-class, not only in prestige and honours but in sales as well.

Ali doesn't belong in ads

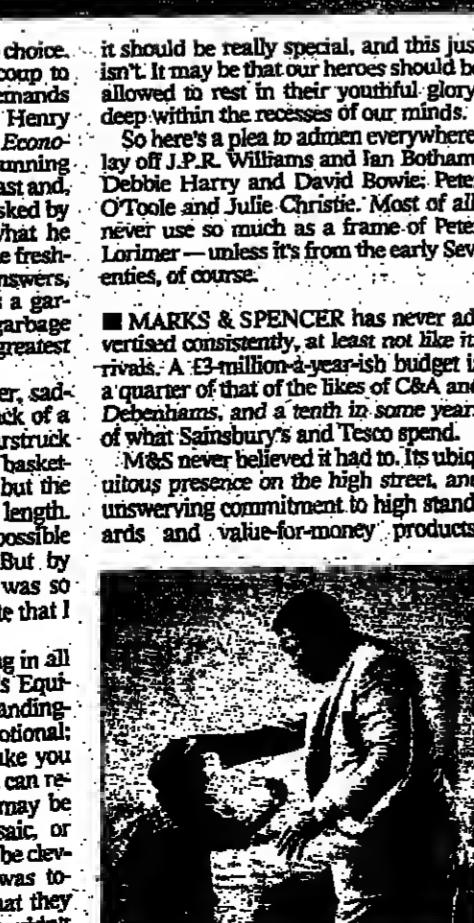
IS ONE OF our heroes safe? First John Lennon appears in the One 2 One campaign alongside Chris Evans; now comes Muhammad Ali for the Equitable Life. The difference is, of course, that Ali finally agreed to appear in one of the countless ads he has been featured in, and Lennon had no choice.

There is no doubt that it's a coup to land. His mere appearance demands the viewer's attention — as did Henry Kissinger's presence in a recent *Economist* 1. Make no mistake, it is stunning to see Ali on the screen — in the past and, more importantly, in the present. Asked by a little boy basketball player what he would be if he weren't a boxer, the fresh-faced Ali of all our yesterdays answers by way of old footage: "If I was a garbage man, I'd be the greatest garbage man in the world. I'd be the greatest whopper I'd have done."

Now the present and a sadder, sadder Ali cruises around in the back of a limousine, looking starsstruck in the street. The ad ends with the basketball player trying to punch Ali, but the greengrocer holds him at arm's length. The old frame says "Anything's possible when it's an Equitable Life". But by then who's paying attention? I was so dumfounded by Ali's reduced state that I was immune to the advertiser.

That sets your mind spinning in all directions, none of them towards Equitable Life. It's not hairs-standing-up-the-back-of-your-neck emotional: not the positive enough to make you emphasise with the idea that you can retire still be the greatest. It may be because the soundtrack is prosaic, or that a director tries too hard to be clever. It where my head spun was to wademy Ali memories and what they evoke about my younger self. I couldn't then like the leap to the Equitable Life. If Muhammad Ali is in a commercial,

Stefano Hatfield



Past glory: the sadder, sadder Ali

he should be really special, and this just isn't. It may be that our heroes should be allowed to rest in their youthful glory, deep within the recesses of our minds.

So here's a pica to admonish everywhere: lay off J.P.R. Williams and Ian Botham; Debbie Harry and David Bowie; Peter O'Toole and Julie Christie. Most of all, never use so much as a frame of Peter Lorimer — unless it's from the early Seventies, of course.

MARKS & SPENCER has never advertised consistently, at least not like its rivals. A £3-million-a-year budget is a quarter of that of the likes of C&A and Debenhams, and a tenth of some years of what Sainsbury's and Tesco spend.

M&S never believed it had to. Its ubiquitous presence on the high street, and unwavering commitment to high standards and value-for-money products,

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In 1999 it seems perverse to write about a retailer as sophisticated as M&S having to embrace marketing. Few doubt that, once it does, it will profit hugely and wonder what it was scared of all those years.

Stefano Hatfield is the editor of Campaign.

DIGITAL ONE

DIGITAL SOUND PROGRAMME SERVICE CONTRACTS

Registration of interest in tendering for channels on the national commercial digital radio multiplex.

Closing date for Registration 12th February 1999

Digital One Limited, which has been awarded the sole licence to operate the commercial national digital radio multiplex, is now inviting expressions of interest from those who want to be included in the selection and contractual process for providers of sound programme services.

There are currently three available digital sound programme service channels identified below. Digital One may consider proposals to provide any of the other audio programmes services outlined in its licence application, although capacity is currently reserved for the existing independent national broadcasters and other proposed service providers identified in that application. Digital One may also consider making available capacity instead for other programme services which would extend listener choice and which are supported by quality resources and research.

1 Soft Adult Contemporary. This channel will be mainly music based, broadly targeted at adults aged 25 to 44 and will operate 24 hours a day in stereo.

2 Plays, Books and Comedy Channel. This channel will be predominantly a speech based service consisting of serialised plays, books and comedy programmes and is proposed to operate in mono for 13 hours a day.

3 Club Dance Music Channel. A music station targeted at adults between 15 and 34, operating through the night for 11 hours in stereo.

Applicants should respond in writing by 12th February 1999 but Digital One reserves the right to extend this date or contract with other parties. It is expected that contracts will be offered to successful applicants in March 1999.

Further information about the multiplex, the available channels, target audiences and requirements of service providers is available from:

Quentin Howard, Chief Executive,
Digital One Limited, 7 Swallow Place, Oxford Circus, London W1A 5NT

To be included in the tender process, please contact Quentin Howard in writing, indicating which channel or channels you wish to apply for. Responding to this advertisement does not commit you to proceeding with the tender process.

Further information on the qualifications to be a digital sound programme service provider is available from the Radio Authority.

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OLYMPICS

British official accuses Salt Lake

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

A LEADING British Olympic official claimed yesterday that Salt Lake City should lose its right to stage the 2002 Winter Games, but admitted it was not practical.

Simon Clegg, the chief executive of the British Olympic Association, said that unless there were drastic changes to the bidding process, the Olympic movement would lose any credibility it still retained.

He claimed that members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) behaved in an improper manner during their visits to Great Britain during Manchester's bid for the 1996 and 2000 Games, but a lack of evidence prevented an inquiry from being launched.

His revelations followed more damaging allegations surrounding the Salt Lake City bid, with one member of the bidding team claiming that a suitcase containing \$5,000 (£3,000) was carried to wine and dine members of the IOC.

Piilo Haggman, of Finland,

has already resigned her seat on the IOC ahead of the official inquiry into the Salt Lake City bid and a further 12 members

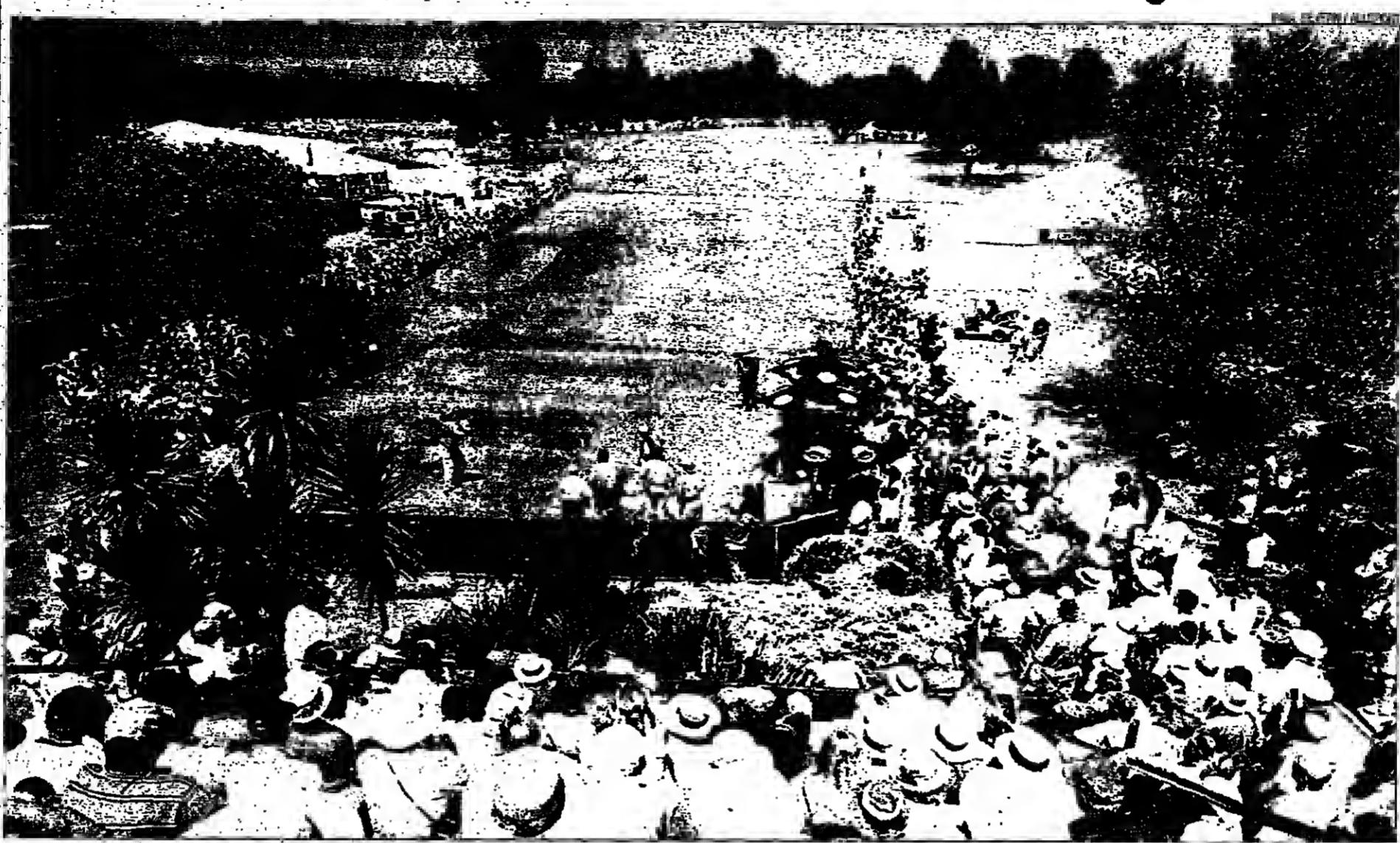
are set to follow when the findings are published next week. Clegg said: "In a perfect world, Salt Lake City wouldn't be allowed to host the 2002 Games, but the practicalities mean that finding an alternative at such short notice would be almost impossible."

He said that suspicion had not been pointed at the three recent British bids — Birmingham (1992) and Manchester (1996 and 2000) — but added: "There were certain allegations made about IOC members while they were in Manchester. The complaints were forwarded to the IOC, but were hard to substantiate."

Junichi Yamaguchi, a senior official in the Nagano team that bid successfully for the 1998 Winter Olympics, claimed yesterday that records concerning its bid were destroyed after IOC members asked that they be kept secret. He said \$14 million (£8.5 million) was spent on entertaining 62 IOC officials, but added: "We were concerned that if the documents were made public, it could cause unpleasantness for the IOC."

GOLF: FORMER ENGLISH AMATEUR CHAMPION AMONG LEADERS AFTER FIRST DAY OF SOUTH AFRICAN OPEN

Garbutt makes most of early start



Els, of South Africa, watched by a packed gallery, tees off during his round at Stellenbosch yesterday. He started promisingly, but finished the day four shots behind the leaders

THERE are days at a golf tournament when the leaders are determined, not so much by one player's edge over another as by other factors. The day of the first round of the South African Open was one such. The weather made a big difference. Those who started early played in calm conditions, but those who played later faced a gusty wind and intense heat as the temperature rose to nearly 40C.

Garbutt, whose best finish in a European tour event was seventh in the Dutch Open last year, went to bed at 9pm on Wednesday, woke seven hours later and was on the first tee at 6.50am. He played steadily, birdieing three of his first four holes before threeputting from 20ft on the 6th. Coming home was harder, and he added "only" two more birdies.

Garbutt finished only 38th in the Alfred Dunhill SA PGA

champion, who has not had a distinguished career as a professional, and Sven Struver, the Germany World Cup player, are the leaders after recording rounds of 67. All three started their first rounds between 6.30am and 7.20am and were back in the clubhouse before midday. It could be more difficult for them today, when they tee off between 11.30am and noon.

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FROM JOHN HOPKINS, GOLF CORRESPONDENT
IN STELLENBOSCH

Championship at Houghton golf club in Johannesburg last Sunday, but he was suffering from a stomach upset there and he seemed to be a different player on this occasion. His putting, in particular, had improved. "It can really blow here," Garbutt said. "We're lucky to have the best of the weather."

SCORES FROM STELLENBOSCH

LEADING FIRST-ROUND SCORES (South Africa unless stated): 67: R McGinn (US), E Garbutt (Eng), S Struver (Germany), P McEvoy (Ireland), J van der Merwe (Eng); 68: D Frost, S Papen, M Moulard (Wales), R Keelan, H Aberts, I Palmer, A Roestof, D Faughn, P McGinley (Eng), 70: C Kamps, N Faldo (Eng), P. McGinley (Eng), D McEwan, G Maitland (SA), S Lyle (Aus), A B Maitland, G Maitland (SA), I Gerardo (Spa), M Gortane, C Chaine (US), 71: E Els, M A Martin (Spa), D Bates, P Sjoland (Swe), S Allen (Aus).

R Gonzalez (Arg), P Blake, M McNulty (Irl), W Coetzee, A Pitt (US), S Tinne (Den), R Williams, J. B. Johnson (Eng), P. Morris (Swe), S. B. Johnson (Eng), M Rose (Eng), G Owen (US), B Papas, I Hutchings, S Daniels, D Gammon, R Whitaker (US), B Fouchie, H. Thiel (Gen), Other scores: 72: D. J. Smith (Eng), T. Rose (Eng), T. B. Jones (Den), A. Collart (Sco), P Broadhurst (Eng), 73: A. Wall (Eng), 78: P. U. Johnson (Swe).

When was the last time he outscored Ernie Els? "It was a piece of cake," Faldo said. "There is nothing going on out there. The greens are holding. It's there for the taking. Par is 68 max right now. Ernie Els will make mincemeat of him."

Nick Faldo also started early, at 7.10am, and was furious from a stomach upset there and he seemed to be a different player on this occasion. His putting, in particular, had improved. "It can really blow here," Garbutt said. "We're lucky to have the best of the weather."

Els set off at 11.50am, just

after Faldo had finished. For his first seven holes, he looked as though he might, indeed, do as Faldo had suggested, holing putts of 30ft on the 5th and 29ft on the 6th. However, the 8th stopped him in his tracks. He drove into the left rough, took three to reach the green and then missed a six-footer for par. After that, he went off the boil, coming home in 37, one over par, and failed to get his par at the 18th.

That is not very likely. The forecast is for more scorching heat, with temperatures reaching 40C. The day could again belong to those who have an early start.

Paul McGinley, who started

at 12.20pm, ten minutes ahead of Anthony Wall, went round in 69, which was notable because he was one of very few to score well so late in the day and because he had a hole in one on the 7th. Wall's scores for the 12th, 13th and 14th were 6.1.6 — against a par of 5.3.5.

"It was a different course

this afternoon," Els said. "You never know in the Cape. It might rain tomorrow."

That is not very likely. The

forecast is for more scorching

heat, with temperatures reaching 40C. The day could again

belong to those who have an

early start.

HOCKEY

Southgate set sights on triple goal

By SYDNEY FRISKIN

Slough set sights on triple goal

By CATHY HARRIS

SOUTHGATE will entertain Hounslow, their traditional rivals, when the National League restarts on Sunday after the winter break. The clubs meet again at the same venue in the sixth round of the English Hockey Association (EHA) Men's Cup on February 28.

Hounslow, third from the bottom in the premier division, face a daunting task, but their opponents, holding third position, will have to draw heavily on reserve strength with Giles, Livesey, Sly and Simons all unfit, although Simons is expected to be on the bench. At centre half, Max Diamond, the Australia international, will be a source of inspiration to the three front-runners, Eiko Roti, Duncan Woods and Danny Kerrey.

Canterbury, the league leaders, and Beeston meet for the

first time this season at the

Polo Farm, where Sean Kerly,

the player-manager, and David Mathews, will again be out

of action. "Beeston are a tenuous team and we are wary of them," Kerly said. He made

particular reference to Craig Keegan, the Beeston midfield player, who has scored 14 goals in ten matches.

Cannock, in second place,

are at full strength, with the

recovery of Kalbir Takher

from injury, against Guildford, who held Mark Hoskin

from Reading, and Richard

Arscott, from Hampton.

Beeston's new signings, Victory in a triangular tournament at Havant has boosted their

confidence.

Reading play their post-

poned EHA Cup fifth-round

fix tomorrow at home against

Loughborough Students, for

which Simon Mason, their

goalkeeper, is unavailable,

but he will join them for

the trip to Bourne on Sunday

for a league match. Brook-

lands, at the bottom of the

table, need a win away to East

Grinstead to have any chance

of survival.

Sri Lankans grow weary of debate over Muralitharan

By MICHAEL HENDERSON

Darrell Hair's decision to stand himself down from the umpires' panel for this tournament — and his imminent disrepute charge, brought against him for calling Muralitharan's bowling action "diabolical" in a recent book — has not banished this difficult subject. The whole of Australia, or at least that part of it which takes an interest in cricket, is talking about it.

Waugh, the captain of the Australia one-day team, carried his injury from the tournament and missed the first three games, when Shane Warne led the side. In Hobart, when Sri Lanka won the latest game by three wickets, to gain their first victory, Warne again took over the captaincy after Waugh withdrew.

With Ponting in the doghouse and Michael Bevan nursing a groin strain, they have summoned Stuart Law, the Queensland and Essex batsman, and Michael Kasprowicz, the seam bowler, for the game against England at the Adelaide Oval next Tuesday, Australia Day. Kasprowicz

SCOREBOARD FROM HOBART

HOBART (Sri Lanka won toss): Sri Lanka best Australia by five wickets	
AUSTRALIA	
M E Waugh c Mahanama b Jayasuriya... 12	
G 3 Bevan c Mahanama b Jayasuriya... 1	
b Wickramasinghe	
O S Lohmann c Jayasuriya... 51	
b Jayasuriya	
S 2 Lee c Jayasuriya b Mahanama... 18	
b Jayasuriya	
S 3 Waugh c Jayasuriya b Mahanama... 20	
b Jayasuriya	
M G Seven c Kalushoorana... 18	
b Muralitharan	
B P Johnson c Virender Sehwag... 5	
b Muralitharan	
A C Das c out	
G O McGrath not out	
Eats (2 w, 2 n, 3 1) 21	
Total (5 wkt, 50 overs) 210	
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-20, 2-25, 3-18, 4-138, 5-153, 6-165, 7-198, 8-198, 9-203.	
Umpires: S J Davis and P D Potter.	

The whispering has not stopped since the Sri Lankans arrived in this country. Some umpires are believed to side with Hair, so it would be something short of a sensation, though still an extraordinary event, if Muralitharan were called on Saturday. Peter van der Merwe, the match referee, will have to mention his abnormal action in his report at the end of the tournament and the International Cricket Council will once again be presented with evidence requiring some form of judgment.

Muralitharan is thoroughly fed up with the whole business. As soon as he came on to bowl in the first match in Brisbane, spectators called "no ball" and the jeering has not stopped. Arjuna Ranatunga, the captain, feels that his bowler may not want to tour Australia again.

"It's so unfortunate that a brilliant bowler who has taken 200 wickets, every time he goes into the field he has this problem. That was here. If someone is having a problem, then the first thing they have to do is come to the captain and the manager. No one has spoken to me about it anywhere. No one has spoken to the manager."



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When we came last time, the public backed us and the media backed us. This time, it

is different. I don't know what it is or where it comes from. Something is wrong somewhere. Murali has played for eight years and only once had a problem. That was here. If someone is having a problem, then the first thing they have to do is come to the captain and the manager. No one has spoken to me about it anywhere. No one has spoken to the manager."

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In 51 Test matches stretching back to 1983, Sidhu has scored 3,202 runs at an average of 42.13. A barren series against New Zealand, in which he totalled just 45 runs from four innings, was his first failure for some time. He still averages almost 50 over the past two

years, but, at 35, he may find that his career at the highest level is over as the selectors bring in younger players.

The likelihood is that Nayan Mongia, the wicketkeeper, will move up the order to open with Sadagopan Ramesh, a new cap, in the first of the two-match Test series, which will begin amid high security in Madras next Thursday. Laxmi Ratna Shukla, an all-rounder, could be another to play his committee member.

INDIA SQUAD: Mohammad Ashraful, Sajid Ali, Sharad Ganguly, Sachin Tendulkar, Ravi Dravid, VVS Laxman, Venkatesh Prasad, Harbhajan Singh, Sunil Joshi, Sridharan Rathnam, Venkatesh Karthik, Laxmi Ratna Shukla.

However, there was a time when the very idea of an A tour this winter was doubtful, initially, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) had looked at visiting

ATHLETICS 43

Running out of Africa towards a place in the England team

Hoddle happy with rising rate of interest

BY MATT DICKINSON

A NEW year and a new sponsor for the England team, but will 1999 offer a bright new start for Glenn Hoddle? The Nationwide Building Society will certainly hope so after staking £15 million on the fate of the England coach and the international team over the next four years.

Such as they talked earnestly about supporting the grass roots of the game yesterday, the building society's marketing men know that it is to the fluctuating fortunes of Hoddle and his team that they have tied their money and, more significantly, their reputation.

Still, they must be brave gambling men at heart, because they have ignored the recent scandals at the Football Association, which cost Graham Kelly and Keith Wiseman their jobs, England's recent European championship qualifying results and Hoddle's uneasy relationship with the media to stake their money on long-term success.

Those in the commercial department at Lancaster Gate can pat themselves on the back for securing almost four times the amount that Green Flag had paid for the same sponsorship privileges, but the new deal also poses one question. If this England team is valued at £15 million over four years, just how much more would a truly successful one be worth?

Perhaps Hoddle will find out in years to come, but first he must face five months that could be defining ones in his reign as England coach. The jury is still out on his credentials as he enters the last 18 months of his contract.

With just one victory from England's first three qualifying matches — and that against Luxembourg — games at home to Poland in March and Sweden in June, followed by Bulgaria away will be critical.

Hoddle announced yesterday that a match had also



Hoddle positive

confidence," he said yesterday, "and I think a sell-out shows that."

"We are delighted to be playing France and so is the country. That will be a bell of a game with a real edge to it, because the result will be important as well as the performance. A good result will give us a major lift, confidence-wise. They don't come any bigger than the world champions, so it couldn't be better."

It is qualification for the European championship that remains the target, though, and England's campaign has got off to a highly unconvincing start. "Two wins at Wembley

would put a different complexion on the group," the England coach said yesterday. "That is the wrong attitude. We are bang in the middle of the season and the qualifiers and we are focused on what is ahead."

The Nationwide must be as confident as Hoddle, because its sponsorship deal is not dependent on England's success in qualifying for the European championship. In paying so much money, however, it is only reasonable that it might expect the England team's image to improve. It will hope the talk at Bishop's Abbey press conferences is of football rather than World Cup diaries and faith healers.

"The days of taking the money and running are long gone," Phil Carting, the FA's commercial director, said. "The image of the team and players is very, very important. The sponsors are sharing a bit of the cloak with the national team and we think they are buying into passion, excellence, professionalism and honesty."

The players will not be any richer for the deal. The FA's contribution to the players' pool was settled, after some wrangling, before the World Cup and they will not be receiving any additional cash for commercial appearances.

The FA was not the only organisation to benefit yesterday. The Football League's sponsorship deal with the Nationwide, which was due to expire in the summer, has been extended for another two years with a significant increase, to more than £4 million per year. "Attendances have been rising every year that we have been involved with the Nationwide," Richard Scudmore, the League's chief executive, said, "and they are up 4 per cent already this time. We will be building on that with them."

The Football Conference will also be sponsored by the Nationwide for the next two years. "We are supporting the game of football as a whole," Brian Davis, the chief executive, said. But it is the fortunes of the England team that matter most.

West Ham United are expected to spend the first of the riches from the sale of John Hartson next week when Marc-Vivien Foé arrives at Upton Park. The Cameron midfield player is due in London on Monday for a medical and is expected to conclude a £4 million move. The 23-year-old was close to signing for Manchester United from Lens last season, but the deal was called off when he broke his leg. United have since made three significant signings and there was no indication yesterday that they would try to resurrect the transfer.

For someone so clearly aware of the importance of shape in the spicy world of modern women's tennis, she is showing an alarming disdain for the small rectangle on the court into which her service should be dropping.

In her second-round match yesterday, the 18-year-old served up 31 double faults against Miho Saeki of Japan, but somehow scrambled to victory 1-6, 6-4, 10-8. Added to the 26 that she produced in the first round, if took her aggregate

for the tournament to 57. Two matches in Sydney last week yielded 34 doubles and her tally for her past seven matches now stands at 147.

The obsession with Anna Kournikova may have reached new heights at the Australian Open, the men of Melbourne melting at the feet of the Russian *maiden*, but one aspect of her play has plunged to near-farce.

For someone so clearly aware of the importance of shape in the spicy world of modern women's tennis, she is showing an alarming disdain for the small rectangle on the court into which her service should be dropping.

Kournikova should beware. A gaggle of teeny talent is clamouring for her crown, as witnessed yesterday by the arrival of another Soviet starlet, Elena Dementieva. Seventeen, leggy and blonde, with elongated fingernails painted metallic silver, she ultimately succumbed to that gnarled veteran, Martina Hingis.

The Swiss miss visibly

frowned upon the gallery's allegiance to the unknown Dementieva, but she will be in for more of the same — and then some — when she faces Jelena Dokic, the 15-year-old local heroine tomorrow.

Hingis has grown up to crave her fame. She describes herself as one of the game's Spice Girls, often treating herself to extravagant diamonds as reward for her performance. In an effort to further brighten her profile, she has enlisted an established croupier as her doubles partner here. However, in choosing Kournikova, Hingis may already be dwelling on the past.

Rusekoff beaten, page 46

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